

BRIEFING NOTE

Agenda Item 6b

**TO: CHILDRENS AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE
PANEL**

DATE: 15 APRIL 2010

RE: UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE WORKING GROUP – FINAL REPORT

Purpose

To receive the final report of the Unauthorised Absence Working Group established by the Panel at its meeting on 11 June 2009.

Background

The Children's and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel identified 'Unauthorised Absence' as a potential issue to investigate during the 2009/10 municipal year. The Panel were concerned about headline figures which suggested pupils lost a significant amount of education to unauthorised absence and wished to investigate the situation.

The Panel are asked to consider the report and approve the recommendations for submission to Cabinet.

Recommendations

That:

- 1. an absence/attendance strategy for Walsall is developed encompassing and engagement of all areas of Children & Young People services, Schools and Children's Workforce within 12 months;**
- 2. Engagement with community leaders is continued by Children's Services – Serco when developing strategies and guidance for schools on the topic of attendance;**
- 3. The working group endorse the tackling holiday absence document and consider it to be a useful tool for schools, although it is recommended that**
 - a. the wording of the model letters is thoroughly reviewed**
 - b. letters are addressed to 'Dear Parent / Guardian'**
- 4. Awareness of the issues surrounding the effect of absence is improved amongst;**
 - a) Families/communities**
 - b) Governors**
 - c) Elected Members**
 - d) The Local Authority - message from Walsall's leaders that 'every day matters and every lesson counts'**
 - e) Children's Services – Serco promote good attendance by reporting and press releases;**

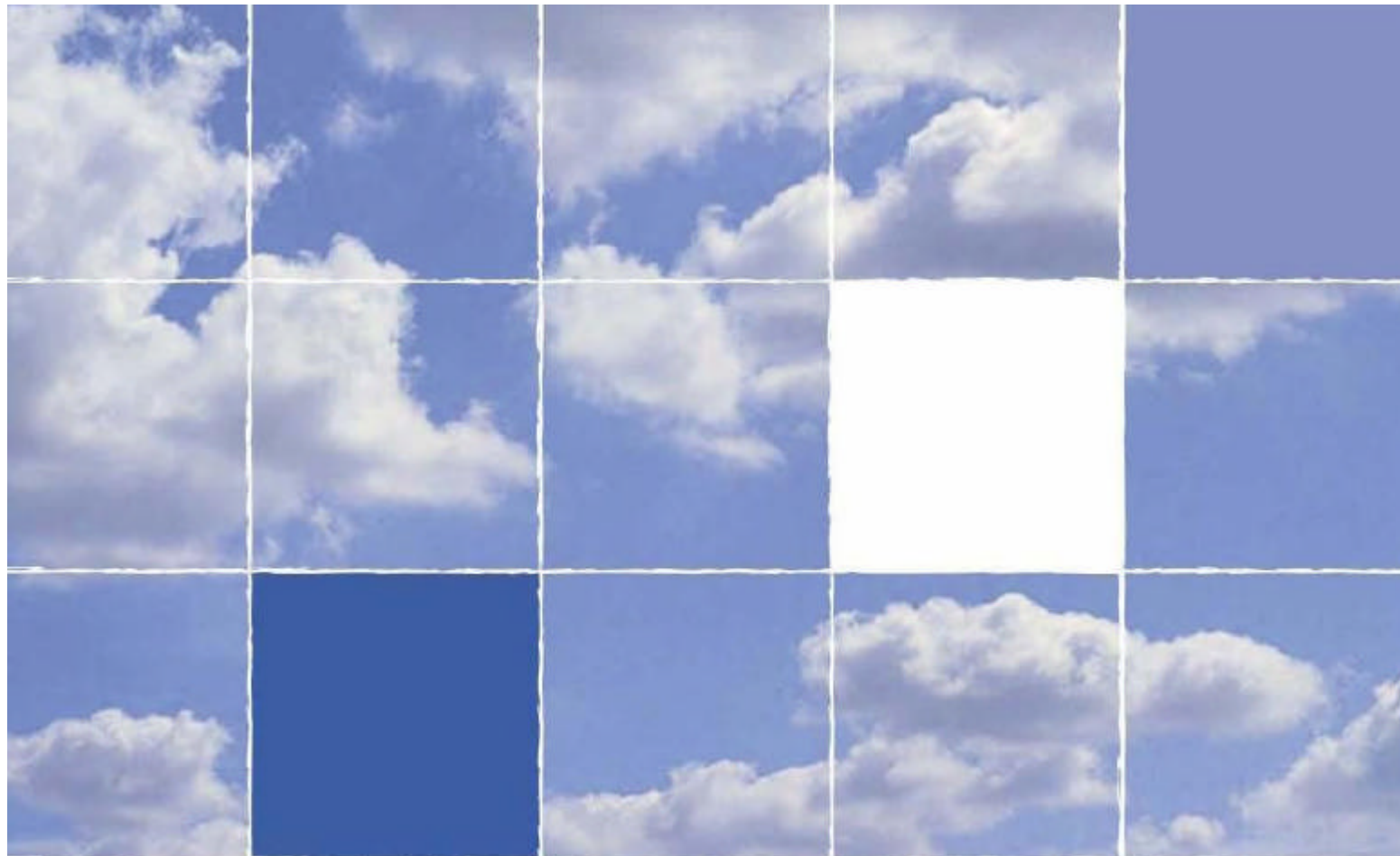
5. Through the member development steering group a training session is commissioned for elected members and parent governors on attendance for the 2010/11 municipal year.
6. Head teachers should be supported to aim for a consistent approach with schools across the borough through the governing body by;
 - a) A school governor on each governing body is elected as 'lead' for attendance (a information pack is provided to give assistance in the role of lead governor);
 - b) Through the governing body head teachers are encouraged to consider all types of absence and to actively challenge 'authorised' absences.
 - c) The working group recommend that governing bodies have a standard item on absence at their meetings with targets set, monitored and evaluated.
7. Progress on attendance (and recommendations if implemented) in Walsall schools is taken to the Children and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel in 6 months

Author

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Scrutiny Officer

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Unauthorised Absence

Report by the Unauthorised Absence Working Group

**To be presented to the Children's and Young People
Scrutiny and Performance Panel – 15 April 2010**



Walsall Council

Chairs Foreword

This report has, as its starting point, the aim of promoting good school attendance levels for every child in the borough of Walsall, regardless of ethnic background or economic status. The working group found that there are different types of absence and different reasons for absence. The group also established that all types of absence have a detrimental impact upon the educational attainment of children. The group received information on both national and local guidance aimed at tackling absence. It also found that the national focus on absence is on persistent absence. Walsall schools are working towards consistency in reducing holiday absence, however, further work is required to ensure that all Walsall schools adopt a consistent approach. By consulting with head teachers, governor support officers, and community leaders the group have produced recommendations which, it anticipates, will promote a consistent approach to dealing with school absence across the borough.

The Panel are asked to consider the report and approve the recommendations for submission to Cabinet.



*Councillor Barbara Cassidy
Lead Member, Unauthorised Absence Working Group*



*Councillor Keith
Chambers*

*Alan McDevitt
Parent Governor –
Co-opted member of
Children's and Young
People Scrutiny and
Performance Panel*

Contents

Introduction	3
Terms of Reference	3
Membership	3
Methodology	3
Report Format	4
Definitions of absence	5
Impact on child	6
National guidance	6
Local context	7
The law and penalty notices	8
Head teacher meeting	8
Governor support	9
Meeting with Community Groups	9
Good practice and factors that improve attendance	10
Recommendations	11
Appendix	13
Appendix 1 - Full terms of reference	
Appendix 2 - A full list of witnesses	
Appendix 3 - The tackling holiday absence document	
Appendix 4 - Absence by Council Ward 2007 – 2008	
Appendix 5 - Fixed penalty notices 2007-08 by Council Ward	
Appendix 6 - Persistent Absence data for statistical neighbours/Black Country/National comparisons	

Introduction

The Children's and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel identified 'Unauthorised Absence' as a potential issue to investigate during the 2009/10 municipal year. The Panel were concerned about headline figures which suggested pupils lost a significant amount of education to unauthorised absence and wished to investigate the situation.

A small working group was appointed to consider the issue; this group has held 5 meetings and worked in between meetings to achieve their objectives.

Terms of Reference

At its first meeting in October 2009, the working group set its terms of reference as 'To promote a consistent approach to unauthorised absence across the borough'. The working group received evidence and gained an improved understanding of the subject. In January 2010 the groups terms of reference were revised to; -

'To promote a consistent approach to absence across the borough and improve understanding of the different types of absence and the effect absence has on Children and Young Peoples attainment'

The working group's full terms of reference can be viewed at appendix 1.

Membership

Councillor Cassidy
Councillor Chambers
Alan McDevitt

Lead Member, *Labour*
Labour
Parent Governor – Co-opted member of
Children's and Young People Scrutiny
and Performance Panel

The working group was supported by two officers:

Caroline Guest


Access Manager, Children's Services -
Serco

Nikki Ehlen

Scrutiny Officer

Methodology

In order to complete their work the working group held 5 meetings. One meeting was at Chuckery Primary School, where members met with a group of head teachers to discuss the topic of absence. A representative from Governor Support attended a separate meeting to discuss how the working group could address governing bodies at



schools with their recommendations. Members also worked outside of meetings to gather evidence and report back to the group. A full list of witnesses can be viewed at appendix 2.

Report Format

The report is a summary of the evidence the working group received along with comments and suggestions for future action.

Definitions of Absence

Persistent absence (PA)	Measured by the amount of days absent during an academic year (20% or more / 32 days of absence over 3 terms) May have a mixture of unauthorised and authorised absence
Unauthorised	Absence not authorised by head teacher
Authorised	Where a head teacher is satisfied with the explanation for absence.
Holiday	Head teacher can authorise up to 10 days holiday leave in special circumstances. In exceptional circumstances, head teachers may approve leave for more than 10 days which is called extended holiday. If a holiday is taken without authorisation then the absence is treated as unauthorised.

Persistent absence is a national priority as set out in the overall Children and Young Peoples Plan (approved by Council in July 2009). The target is to reduce persistent absence in secondary schools to 5% by 2011. Approximately half of Walsall's persistently absent children have also had a holiday absence. Priority Schools are identified each year, by the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF), based on the number of persistently absent pupils on their roll. Priority Schools are under half term scrutiny and are measured on their progress to reduce persistent absence. There are less persistently absent pupils in Walsall primary schools than nationally. There are slightly higher numbers of persistent absentees in maintained Walsall secondary schools than nationally. **NB. However, persistent absentees on roll at academies do not count towards the overall target.**

Although there is no right to a leave of absence, if head teachers believe the circumstances warrant it they have the discretion to authorise up to 10 days holiday leave. In exceptional circumstances, head teachers may approve leave for more than 10 days which is called extended holiday. Because of this discretion, there have been differences across schools, as to how the law is applied.

Resolved

The working group recommend that head teachers are encouraged to challenge all types of absence including 'authorised' absences.

Impact on Child

There is a strong link between the amount of absence and qualifications gained.

For example:

73% of pupils will achieve 5A* - C GCSE grades whose attendance is 93.5% or above
60.4% of pupils will achieve 5A* - C GCSE grades whose attendance is between 92.5% and 93.49% which is 14 – 12 days absence
26.7% of pupils will achieve 5A* - C GCSE grades whose attendance is 88% and below. Which is 22 days absence or more

Regular attendance sends out a positive message to children and young people regarding their commitment and attitude to school. There is a strong link between the number of absences and qualifications achieved. A 10 day holiday, each year throughout a child's school life will be equivalent to 120 days of education lost. Some children find it difficult to renew friendships and catch up on work missed particularly maths and science.

The working group established that all types of absence have a negative impact on children and suggested that elected members have a responsibility to promote good attendance at school, in their role as 'corporate parents'.

Resolved

The working group recommend that, through the member development steering group, a training session is commissioned for elected members and parent governors on attendance.

National Guidance

Nationally, government policy aims to minimise the amount of absences a pupil has as a result of term time holidays, and schools are expected to robustly challenge requests for holidays. In July 2008 guidance from the DCSF (Keeping Pupils Registers) clarified the difference between 'extended leave' and 'family holiday'. Following this guidance the first 'Education Walsall' guidance document (2006) was reviewed and it became apparent that national and local guidance were not complimentary. Walsall Children's Services – Serco began consultation with head teachers and found that schools wanted local guidance to be in line with national guidance and the guidance to be consistently applied across the borough. In response to this, the document 'tackling holiday absence' was developed in consultation with head teachers, the local authority and community organisations. The tackling holiday absence document can be viewed at appendix 3.

The 'tackling holiday absence' document is aimed at encouraging and supporting schools to make a clear statement about term time holidays and to manage the issue consistently.

Resolved

The working group consider the tackling holiday absence document to be a useful tool for schools, and endorse the document subject to the following amendments;

a. the wording of the model letters is thoroughly reviewed

b. letters are addressed to 'Dear Parent / Guardian'

Local Context

In total **37,063** days of education were lost to holiday absence in Walsall schools (2007 - 2008). Walsall has a higher number of holiday absences than the national average in secondary schools. 14,605 days were lost to combined holiday absence in secondary schools and 22,056.5 days were lost to combined holiday absence in primary schools (2007 – 2008).

Holiday Absence Data 2007 – 2008

Secondary Schools

	Agreed holiday absence	Agreed extended leave	Holiday absence not agreed	Combined holiday absence
Walsall	0.45%	0.0017%	0.13%	0.58%
England	0.38%	0.01%	0.10%	0.49%

Primary Schools

	Agreed holiday absence	Agreed extended leave	Holiday absence not agreed	Combined holiday absence
Walsall	0.67%	0.03%	0.06%	0.78%
England	0.69%	0.02%	0.09%	0.8%

Absence, by Council Ward 2007 – 2008 can be viewed at appendix 4.

Persistent Absence Data 2007- 08

Primary Schools

	Year End 2007 – 08 %
National Average	1.7
Walsall	1.5

Secondary Schools

	Year End 2007 – 08 %
National Average	7.1
Walsall	7.3

Persistent absence data for statistical neighbours / Black Country / national comparisons can be viewed at appendix 6.

The law and Penalty Notices

Nationally parents of a child of compulsory school age are under a legal duty to ensure the regular attendance of that child at the school where he/she is a registered pupil. Failure to do so may result in the local education authority prosecuting parents. If found guilty of the offence, each parent can be fined up to £2,500 and/or sentenced to 3 months imprisonment. The parent may alternatively be subject to a penalty notice.

In Walsall each school has dedicated 'Education Welfare Officer' time allocated to them and most schools have additional service support through the 'Integrated Support Workers Team'. Additional advice and training is available to all schools from the 'Specialist Adviser Trainer' service which includes a School Health Adviser to offer medical advice and fast track referrals to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services for early signs of school refusal.

Where a pupil takes an unauthorised holiday a referral can be made to the school education welfare officer, who can issue each parent with a penalty notice for each child they have taken on holiday. The penalty notice is £50 per adult, per child, if paid within the first 28 days. This is increased to £100 within 42 days of issue of the penalty notice. If the penalty notice is not paid after the 42 days then a summons will be presented to court, and a date set.

The working group found that in Walsall (2007-08) a total of 71 fixed penalty notices were paid by parents, and 41 fixed penalty notices were directed to court. Fixed penalty notices (2007-08) by Council ward can be viewed at appendix 5.

Head Teacher Meeting

Members met with a group of head teachers at Chuckery Primary School, these head teachers represented Chuckery Primary School, Blue Coat Secondary School, and Pool Hayes Arts and Community School. Head teachers considered all types of absence to be a problem (not just unauthorised) because all absences have a detrimental impact on a child's education. The working group discovered that inconsistent practices across schools can create friction and put pressure on head teachers to authorise absence and grant holiday leave. Members heard that governors were integral to supporting head teachers in challenging absence. As a result of the meeting and in consultation with head teachers the group amended their objective to:-

'To promote a consistent approach to absence across the borough and improve understanding of the different types of absence and the effect absence has on Children and Young Peoples attainment'

The working group found that different practices, relating to absence across neighbouring schools may put pressure on head teachers to authorise holiday absences. The working group

consider it important to achieve consistency in the way absence is tackled, as much as possible across schools in Walsall.

Governor Support

To find out more information on the role of governors in reducing absence in their school, a 'Governor Development Officer' was invited to the working group. The working group received advice on current practices at governor meetings and considered how this could be used to improve attendance and promote consistency in practices across the borough.

The working group found that, for a school to achieve an 'outstanding' Ofsted inspection rating, absence and the way a school tackles absence is significant. The working group consider governing bodies to be key in supporting head teachers to reduce absence by setting strategies and policies for schools.

Resolved

The working group recommend that governing bodies have a standard item on absence at their meetings with targets set, monitored and evaluated. This would ensure that the school is being 'proactive' rather than 'reactive' in dealing with absence.

The working group also recommend that a school governor on each governing body is elected as 'lead' for attendance. In recognising that this may require support, the working group recommend that an information pack is provided to give individuals assistance to fulfil the role of lead governor.

Meeting with Community Groups

The group were keen to ensure that community representatives were invited to a meeting of the group, to seek their knowledge and views on the topic of attendance. Although a selection of groups were invited, the only community group able to attend the meeting was 'Aaina Asian Women's Centre'.

The religious festival 'Eid' was discussed, and it was concluded that a child should take just one day off school for this celebration (which is in line with DCSF guidance). The group also discussed a high profile case where a child was kidnapped whilst abroad and child protection issues when children are taken on extended holidays. The group also considered funerals and the issue of religious observance when a close relative dies; members considered it to be important that where possible children were present in school and suggested that where appropriate head teachers should be encouraging parents to send their children into school.

Resolved

The group concluded that the views and support of community leaders were important in achieving cultural change in

communities and recommended that they were involved in future work on this subject.

Good Practice and Factors that Improve Attendance

Several factors contribute to a child regularly attending school, these include; -

- The ethos of the school
- Support from teachers
- Aspiration of the family
- Parental attitude
- Role models for children
- The involvement of all those involved in caring for the child

Education Walsall - Serco have piloted attendance shops where children can earn rewards for good attendance, this has proved popular and schools have adopted this approach. Other successful reward systems are awards ceremonies for 100% and improved attendance.


Resolved

The working group suggest that young people need to be inspired to aim high. The working group recommend that awareness of the issues surrounding the effect of absence is improved amongst those who have an influence on young people.

Recommendations

That

- 1. an absence/attendance strategy for Walsall is developed encompassing and engagement of all areas of Children & Young People services, Schools and Children's Workforce within 12 months;**
- 2. Engagement with community leaders is continued by Children's Services – Serco when developing strategies and guidance for schools on the topic of attendance;**
- 3. The working group endorse the tackling holiday absence document and consider it to be a useful tool for schools, although it is recommended that**
 - a. the wording of the model letters is thoroughly reviewed**
 - b. letters are addressed to 'Dear Parent / Guardian'**
- 4. Awareness of the issues surrounding the effect of absence is improved amongst;**
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 - c) Elected Members**
 - d) The Local Authority - message from Walsall's leaders that 'every day matters and every lesson counts'**
 - e) Children's Services – Serco promote good attendance by reporting and press releases;**
- 5. Through the member development steering group a training session is commissioned for elected members and parent governors on attendance for the 2010/11 municipal year.**
- 6. Head teachers should be supported to aim for a consistent approach with schools across the borough through the governing body by;**
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- 
7. **Progress on attendance (and recommendations if implemented) in Walsall schools is taken to the Children and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel in 6 months**

Appendix


1. Full terms of reference
2. A full list of witnesses
3. The tackling holiday absence document
4. Absence by Council Ward 2007 – 2008
5. Fixed penalty notices 2007-08 by Council Ward
6. Persistent Absence data for statistical neighbours/Black Country/National comparisons

Appendix 1

Work Group Name:	Unauthorised Absence Working Group
Panel:	Children's & Young People
Municipal Year:	2009-10
Lead Member:	Councillor Cassidy
Lead Officer:	Caroline Guest
Support Officer:	Nikki Ehlen
Membership:	Councillor Cassidy Councillor Chambers Alan McDevitt (Parent Governor)

1.	Context			
	<p>The working group has been set up to consider unauthorised absence across Walsall's schools. There is a strong link between the amount of absence and qualifications achieved.</p> <p>For example:</p> <table><tr><td>73% of pupils will achieve 5A* - C GCSE grades whose attendance is 93.5% or above</td></tr><tr><td>60.4% of pupils will achieve 5A* - C GCSE grades whose attendance is between 92.5% and 93.49% which is 14 – 12 days absence</td></tr><tr><td>26.7% of pupils will achieve 5A* - C GCSE grades whose attendance is 88% and below. Which is 22 days absence or more</td></tr></table> <p>Some children find it difficult to renew friendships following absence and to catch up on work missed particularly maths and science. Regular attendance and no absence is a positive message for children and young people regarding their commitment and attitude to school. A 10 day absence, each year throughout a child's time at school will be equivalent to 120 days of education lost.</p>	73% of pupils will achieve 5A* - C GCSE grades whose attendance is 93.5% or above	60.4% of pupils will achieve 5A* - C GCSE grades whose attendance is between 92.5% and 93.49% which is 14 – 12 days absence	26.7% of pupils will achieve 5A* - C GCSE grades whose attendance is 88% and below. Which is 22 days absence or more
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26.7% of pupils will achieve 5A* - C GCSE grades whose attendance is 88% and below. Which is 22 days absence or more				
2.	Objectives			
	<p>To promote a consistent approach to absence across the borough and improve understanding of the different types of absence and the effect absence has on Children and Young Peoples attainment</p>			
3.	Scope			
	<p>What should be included and excluded? The council's response, along with partners and stakeholders, to the Gov'ts 'Aiming High for Young people'</p> <p>To consider a wide range of evidence about unauthorised absence, current activity.</p>			

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Data on unauthorised absence (for what ever reason) by school and ward for 2007/08 2. Data on persistent absence by school and ward for 2007/08 3. A hard copy of the document 'tackling holiday absence' 4. Details of how many penalty notices were issued and how many were paid? How many were prosecuted and what was the outcome? <p>In achieving their objective the group also wanted to consider the impact the credit crunch may have had and to receive data by ward.</p> <p>Members requested that good practice in this area is shared with the working group.</p>
6.	Equalities Implications
	<p>There is a legal and moral obligation to ensure that, when undertaking a scrutiny review, the impact of policies; procedures; strategies and activities is considered within the 6 strands of equality (Age, Disability, Gender, Race, Religion or Belief, and Sexual Orientation)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will the working group consult with each of these six groups regarding this review and its outcomes? • If an EIA has been carried out for this service\policy then what were its outcomes? Can this be mapped into the review? If no EIA has been carried out by the service is one required and can this be reported to the working group?
4.	Who else will you want to take part?
	<p>Think about who else, other than lead officers and members, it would be useful to include either as part of the working group or to bring information at specific points. For example- partners, stakeholders, other authorities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head teachers from both primary and secondary schools including a priority school.
5.	Timescales & Reporting Schedule
	<p>Needs to be completed within the same municipal year and so should be able to report to full panel by the last meeting at the latest but consider the subject- is there anything else that it may need to tie into (e.g. academic or financial year or to coincide with national/sub-regional developments)</p> <p>How often will update be provided to full panel?</p> <p>Needs to be completed by 15 April 2010 for last Children's and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel of this municipal</p>



	year.
6.	Risk factors
	Are there any obstacles that can be predicted? For example, is it dependent on other organisations outside your control and duty to cooperate? Identifying these factors early should help minimise their impact.

List of witnesses

Children's Services - Serco

Caroline Guest - Access Manager,
Milkinder Jaspal - Governor Development Consultant

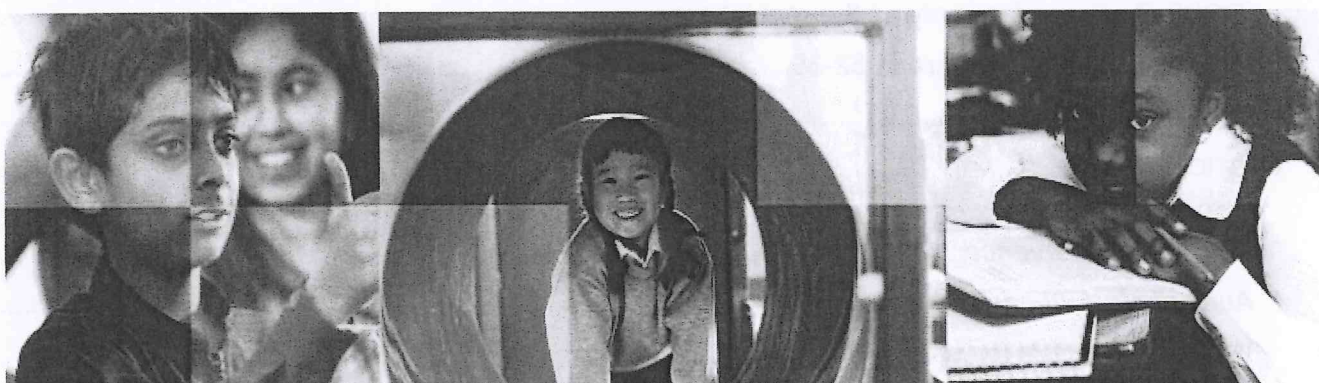
Walsall Schools

Margaret Lever – Head Teacher, Chuckery Primary School
Jim Clarke – Head Teacher, Pool Hayes Arts and Community School
Ken Yeates – Head Teacher, Blue Coat Church of England Performing Arts College

Aaina Asian Women's Centre

Aisha Khan

Tackling Holiday Absence



Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	3
SECTION 1	4
<i>The Law</i>	5
<i>National Context</i>	5
<i>Effect on Attainment</i>	5
<i>Effect on Persistent Absence</i>	6
<i>Persistent Absence (PA)</i>	6
<i>Authority to Authorise Absence</i>	7
<i>Agreed Absence /Extended Leave</i>	7
<i>Religious Observance</i>	8
SECTION 2	9
Facts & Figures –based on 2007-08 data	10
Holiday Absence Data – 2007 – 2008.....	10
What Walsall Parents Have Said and What They Need To Know	11
Procedure for Penalty Notices – Unauthorised Holidays.....	12
SECTION 3	14
Extract from Keeping Pupil Registers: June 2008 (full document at appendix 5).....	15
DCSF Guidance for applying the regulations.	15
Leave of Absence – Paragraph 52-59	15
Forced Marriages	16
SECTION 4	18
<i>Holiday Absence</i>	19
<i>Religious Observance</i>	19
<i>Authority to Authorise Absence</i>	19
<i>Walsall procedure for issuing Penalty Notices</i>	19
Requests for Leave.	20
The Impact of Unauthorised Holiday.....	22
SECTION 5	21
Procedures by Flow Chart.....	21
SECTION 6	26
Appendices	26
<i>Appendix 1- The Correlation between Attendance and Attainment</i>	27
<i>Appendix 2 - Home Office Guidance for Forced Marriage</i>	39
<i>Appendix 3 – Guidance in respect of Religious Observance</i>	40
<i>Appendix 4 – Guidance for Removal from Registers</i>	41
<i>Appendix 5 – Keeping Pupils Registers</i>	42

Appendix 6 – Registration Codes	43
Appendix 7 – Education Welfare Service Extended Leave Notification Form	48
Appendix 8 – Penalty Notices	49
Appendix 9 – Education Welfare Service Referral Form.....	50
Model Letters	51

INTRODUCTION

This guidance has been developed as a partnership between Head teachers, the LA and community organisations.

It is designed to align local practice to the current DCSF guidance to applying regulations as set out in the Education Act 1996 and the Children Act 2004.

This guidance is intended to encourage and support schools to make a clear statement regarding the issues surrounding term time holidays. It is further intended to support Walsall schools to manage the issue consistently and to ensure that the amount of learning time lost to term time holidays is, as a result, minimised.

This guidance is further intended to provide parents with information when considering taking a child away from school for the purpose of a holiday. Schools should inform parents that absence during term time for any reason interrupts the continuity of teaching and learning and disrupts the educational progress of individual children.

This guidance is intended to support education for children and young people in Walsall by encouraging head teachers to make consistent, robust and informed decisions with regard to not/authorising leave for term time holiday; and so parents develop a consistent understanding of the response to expect from Walsall schools and Children's Services.

Maintained schools must be open to all pupils for at least 380 sessions, this is 190 days. In any year this means there are a further 175 days available for a pupils recreation and holiday.

SECTION 1

In Brief

The Law

Under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 parents of a child of compulsory school age are under a legal duty to ensure the regular attendance of that child at the school where he/she is a registered pupil. Failure to fulfil this duty may result in the Local Education Authority prosecuting parents. If found guilty of the offence, each parent can be fined up to £2,500 and /or sentenced to 3 months imprisonment. The parent may alternatively be subject to a penalty notice.

National Context

Nationally, government policy is to encourage schools to minimise the amount of teaching and learning time lost as a result of term time holidays and schools are expected to adopt a much more challenging response to requests for leave for such. All schools need to set absence targets to reduce overall absence and term time holiday absence is a particular category of absence on which schools are now expected to focus.

There is no right to a leave of absence and schools and parents should now fully take into account that holiday absence should not be granted as such. Schools, for some time now, have recognised findings of national research which shows that children who are absent from school even for relatively short periods of absence may never catch up on work they have missed. Children who struggle with English and Mathematics find it hard to catch up when they return to school, while younger children find it difficult to renew friendships with their classmates.

Effect on Attainment

There is a direct correlation between attendance and attainment which can be seen in the DCSF document.

There is a strong link between absence and the qualifications that a pupil can achieve. Every lesson in school matters and those children who have time off find it difficult to catch up – see Appendix 1(The Correlation between attendance and attainment)

Research suggests that children who are taken out of school may not be able to catch up on work that they have missed.

It would appear that any periods of absence may be critical in terms of reduced attainment, particularly once they exceed 10 half days at KS3 and (for low achievers) at key stage 4.

Absences of 2 weeks (50 hours for a full 10 day's holiday) have been shown to have a negative effect on attainment so that pupils leave primary school with lower SATs levels than their peers.

Absences of 2 weeks mean that secondary pupils leave school with fewer GCSE's and lower grades.

There is evidence to show that

74.3% of pupils will achieve 5A* -C whose attendance is 93.5 % or above.

60.4% of pupils will achieve 5A*-C whose attendance is between 92.5% and 93 .49% which is 14-12 days absent.

26.7% of pupils will achieve 5A* C whose attendance is 88% and below which is 22 days or

more.

There is a strong link between the amount of absence that your child has and the qualifications that they achieve. This demonstrates that every lesson in school really matters and that those children who often find it difficult to catch up and do well at school, particularly as the average amount of pupil absence increases.

Whilst it might generally be considered that a holiday is a good family time, **a child's right to a full time education must take priority**. It is now well recognised that children with high attendance perform better in SAT's and achieve higher grades at GCSE. It should be noted that a pupil who takes 10 days holiday a year during term time will achieve only 94.7% attendance if there are no other absences. Furthermore a pupil who otherwise has an attendance level of 95% will have this reduced to 86.8%. Neither of these attendance levels is acceptable and will reduce the likelihood of those children reaching their potential in SAT's and GCSE examinations.

There are 190 statutory school days a year; so there are 175 other days (weekends and school holidays) available for holidays which would not have a negative effect on your child's education. By taking your child on holiday in term time you may be giving them an unspoken message that school doesn't matter. Some children may find it difficult to renew friendships with other pupils when they return to school.

Effect on Persistent Absence

There are many families where children are taken out of school for a family holiday and may also have other absences throughout the academic year. Some absences are related to the holiday, such as tiredness and sickness from viruses caught whilst on holiday. When this is the case a child may be at risk of becoming a persistent absentee (PA). Schools with high numbers of PA pupils will become DCSF PA Priority Schools and as such will be under scrutiny from the DCSF, LA, OFSTED and HMI inspections. Parents should be aware that DCSF are identifying pupils who are persistently absent or who are on track to be persistently absent (PA) and are expecting schools and the LA's to tackle this issue, including where holiday absence has been a contributory factor.

Persistent Absence (PA)

A Persistent Absentee is a pupil who has missed 20% or more of their schooling during an academic year, through both authorised and unauthorised absence. Persistent absence can also be calculated by looking at the amount of sessions missed. DCSF calculate data over the autumn and spring terms to decide which schools will be P.A. priority schools.

A pupil becomes a persistent absentee pupil as soon as they have missed 64 or more sessions of schooling at any time during the academic year. Periodic tracking of pupils can identify those who fall into the persistent absence category, and those who are at risk of becoming persistent absentees.

Pupils with persistent absence are more likely to under achieve at School and remain in Education post 16. Links between attendance and achievement are strong, and Schools which place focus on tackling the issue of persistent absence are more likely to alleviate the anti-social behaviour and vulnerability of their pupils with persistent absence.

Persistent absence has a global effect on Schools and on LAs as a whole. A School becomes a Persistent absence Priority School if a certain percentage of its population has 20% or more absence. The original threshold in 2005/06 for identifying Persistent absence Priority Schools was those Schools which had 10% or more of their population with Persistent absence. This figure has

been reduced annually, the national target for 2010/11 being 5%, in accordance with the overall Children's Plan*. Schools which fall into the Persistent absence priority school category become subject to increased scrutiny, and are required to report on their Persistent absence position on a regular basis. The information which determines whether a School will become a Persistent absence Priority School is taken from the School CENSUS data.

Local Authorities are placed in Persistent Absence Priority categories dependant upon the percentage of persistent absence throughout the authority as a whole. This is measured against the national picture of persistent absence. There are three levels of support which will be given to LA's by the National Strategies Regional Advisor:

Universal Support – LA's which have no Secondary Schools with high levels of Persistent absence. Regional Advisors work with these authorities to ensure there are strategies in place to improve levels of attendance.

Targeted Support – LA's which have at least one Secondary School with high levels of Persistent absence, but do not have a high level of Persistent absence as a LA. Regional Advisors hold Termly progress meetings in order to share good practice, and scrutinise current procedures and progress.

Intensive Support – LA's which have high levels of Persistent absence overall will be monitored by the DCSF, and Half Termly meetings will be held, to scrutinise levels of absence and implement further strategies in order to support the reduction of Persistent absence. DCSF Regional Advisors will visit Persistent absence Schools, and information will be collected from Schools on a Half Termly basis, through a data return workbook.

Schools are required to work closely with EWS in order to support the Persistent absence agenda. Accurate submission and in depth scrutiny of data will be instrumental in ensuring that Schools are successful in the reduction of Persistent absence levels and the improvement of attendance on the whole.

*The local target has been set to reduce PA in Walsall Secondary schools to 4.6% by 2011.

Authority to Authorise Absence

The High Court has confirmed that it is schools, not parents, who authorise absence.

Agreed Absence /Extended Leave

In some very exceptional circumstances head teachers may agree to authorise holiday absence. In cases where absence is authorised for more than 10 days, it is known as 'extended leave of absence' or 'extended holidays'.

When considering requests from parents for extended leave of absence, schools should agree a date of return and this date should be for periods of absence no longer than four school weeks. Schools should not agree to further requests for extended leave if the child/young person has had a previous period of extended leave in that phase of their education.

Schools should notify the Education Welfare Service when any child or young person has been granted leave of absence due to extended leave so that it may be recorded centrally. Parents should note that failure to send their child/children back by the agreed date then they may lose the

place at school or be at risk of prosecution. – See Appendix 7 Education Welfare Service Extended Leave Notification form.

Religious Observance

Walsall schools are recommended to abide by DCSF guidance in respect of absence for religious observance. Sections 44 and 45 of Keeping Pupil Registers – (June 2008) states, 'Under the regulations, schools must authorise absence that is due to religious observance but the day must be:

Exclusively set apart for religious observance; and
Set apart by the parents' religious body (not the parents)

If the religious body sets apart a **single day** for religious observance and the pupil applies for 4 days leave of absence the school is only required to allow **one day**; the rest is discretionary leave. All requests for discretionary leave must be made in advance by pupils' parents.

Parents may ask schools for leave of absence in order to celebrate religious festivals. Absence must be authorised to celebrate the day that is set by a religious organisation. The religious body sets the day for the celebration and not the parent.

If the religious body has not set the day then schools do not need to grant a leave of absence
See Page 24 of DCSF Guidance for Absence and Attendance Codes – January 2009 (Appendix 3)

The High Court has confirmed that it is schools, not parents, who authorise absence.

SECTION 2

The Local Context

Facts & Figures –based on 2007-08 data

Walsall has a higher number of holiday absences than the national average in secondary schools.

In the Autumn and Spring terms of 2007-2008 there were 14,605 days absence due to holiday absence in Walsall secondary schools and 22,056.5 days of absence due to holiday absence in Walsall primary schools. There was 401.5 days of holiday absence in Walsall special schools.

THIS REPRESENTS 37,063 DAYS OF EDUCATION LOST TO HOLIDAY ABSENCE IN WALSALL SCHOOLS.

There is 5.8% of Walsall secondary school population who are PA and 1.5% in primary schools. Therefore there are approximately 1,400 Walsall children who are PA. Many of these pupils have had holiday absence.

Holiday Absence Data – 2007 – 2008

Secondary Schools

14,605 DAYS LOST TO COMBINED HOLIDAY ABSENCE

	H – Agreed Holiday Absence	G – Agreed Extended Leave	F – Holiday absence not agreed (unauthorised)	Combined Holiday Absence
Walsall	0.45%	0.0017%	0.13%	0.58%
England	0.38%	0.01%	0.10%	0.49%

Primary Schools

22,056.5 DAYS LOST TO COMBINED HOLIDAY ABSENCE

	H – Agreed Holiday Absence	G – Agreed Extended Leave	F – Holiday absence not agreed (unauthorised)	Combined Holiday Absence
Walsall	0.67%	0.03%	0.06%	0.78%
England	0.69%	0.02%	0.09%	0.8%

What Walsall Parents Have Said and What They Need To Know

A parent's perception regarding the impact absence has on a child is in complete contrast to that of their teachers and detailed research. It is important to remember a child has a right to be educated. It is hoped that this guidance will persuade parents to not to take their children away from their education for the purpose of a holiday – because there is a clearer understanding around, disruption faced by their children, and their learning

Parents should not expect Walsall schools to agree to requests for holiday absence. Below are some comments made by Walsall parents to the Education Welfare Service when they have been refused permission for holiday absence. The comments demonstrate current parental attitudes, which this guidance is intended to address.

'I know it is important for my child to be in school all the time but a fortnight's holiday won't hurt'.

'I understand Walsall's thoughts on this matter, but we aren't the sort of parents who keep our daughter away from school for no good reason. We aren't like other parents who just take their children out of school when they feel like it'.

'We aren't taking a holiday to Tenerife or places like that. We are going on safari to Africa and it is expensive to do that sort of holiday in the school holidays'.

'I will pay the fine 'cos it is cheaper anyway'

'My child is bright and will catch up'!

'If the teacher gave me the work he is missing I could make sure my son does it when we are away'.

'I'm going to take my child out of that school then! I know I can get a holiday if I change to another school'.

Procedure for Penalty Notices – Unauthorised Holidays

The Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003 has made provision for a penalty notice to be issued in respect of an offence under sec 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. A penalty notice is offering a person the opportunity of discharging any liability to conviction for the offence under Sec 444 (1) of the Education Act 1996, to which the penalty notice relates by payment of a penalty in accordance with the notice.

Referrals to EWOs in respect of unauthorised holiday will be received via a completed Education Welfare Service Referral (EWSREF), Registration Certificates, and any further supporting evidence should also be attached.

Local Authorities are required to have a Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty Notices. **See Appendix 8 “Penalty Notices”**. The Code of Conduct in Walsall does not allow for penalty notices to be issued for unauthorised holiday absence for between 1 & 3 days in total in any six week period.

Following a referral the EWO will contact the family and explain the DCSF recommendations regarding holiday absence and that they may be liable for a penalty notice should the holiday be taken¹. The parents will be sent a 1st letter to that effect. If the unauthorised holiday is then taken, a follow up letter will be issued. If they are in any doubt of their legal position, parents should seek independent legal advice. The penalty notice will then be issued.

Schools should inform their EWO if the child is absent from school on the dates the holiday was requested. When the child returns to school, the school should inform the EWO, who will then take in to account any previous unauthorised absence so these may be included in the PN summons period. Schools should ensure the EWO is made aware of any detail regarding the holiday absence as this may affect evidence needed for the penalty notice or subsequent prosecution.

Where there is strong evidence to suggest that a child has taken unauthorised holiday the EWO will issue each parent a PN for each child they have taken away on holiday. The PN is £50 per Adult Per child if paid within the first 28 days. The PN increases to £100 within 42 days of issue of the PN. If the PN is not paid after the 42 days then a summons will be presented to court, and a date set. School will be informed of the results of the prosecution by their Education Welfare Officer.

If holiday absence is contributing to poor overall absence, then the school and EWO is able to instigate the fast track process leading to prosecution, where parents may be fined up to £2,500 by a Magistrates Court.

¹ Penalty notices can only be issued in respect of compulsory school aged children

Procedure for Family Notices - Unpublished Holidays

The first step is to identify the dates of the unpublished holidays. The dates of the holidays should be identified by the school and the dates of the holidays should be identified by the school. The dates of the holidays should be identified by the school and the dates of the holidays should be identified by the school. The dates of the holidays should be identified by the school and the dates of the holidays should be identified by the school.

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National Context

DCSF

&

Legal Expectations

Keeping Pupil Registers: June 2008

Extract from DCSF Guidance for applying the regulations.

WALSALL CHILDRENS'S SERVICES FULLY EMBRACES THE RECOMMENDATIONS AS SET OUT IN DCSF GUIDANCE 'KEEPING PUPIL REGISTERS – GUIDANCE ON APPLYING THE EDUCATION PUPIL REGISTRATION REGULATIONS' JUNE 2008.

Leave of Absence – Paragraph 52-59

52. The regulation on leave of absence applies to all special school and maintained schools. Whilst it does not apply to independent schools there is nothing that prevents them adopting the principles in both the legislation and this guidance. Some schools may have funding agreements that require them to comply with the regulation.

53. Schools have a discretionary power to grant a pupil time off school during the term and a number of examples are listed in the regulations. However, schools are not restricted to grant time off in those circumstances; they can also do so if they believe there are extenuating or compassionate reasons that justify the leave. For example, children who fall within the groups at particular risk may have needs that require the school to grant time off.

54. All applications for leave of absence must be made in advance by the parent(s), carer(s) or corporate parent that the pupil normally resides with.

55. With the exceptions of family holidays and employment, schools' discretion around leave of absence is far-reaching. They are able to refuse the whole period requested by a pupil's parents, grant part of the period and refuse the remainder, or grant the whole of the period requested. Any leave of absence granted by a school must be recorded as authorised using the appropriate national code. Periods that are refused must be recorded as unauthorised.

56. All requests should be treated on a case by case basis within the school's published attendance policies which should give it the flexibility to respond to difficult circumstances whilst discouraging unnecessary absence. We recommend policies that, for example, neither ban all term-time holidays nor bestow a right to all families to time off for family holidays.

57. The issues that schools should take into account when considering a request for leave of absence include:

- The amount of time requested;
- Age of the pupil;
- The pupil's general absence/attendance record;
- Proximity of SATs and public examinations;
- Length of the proposed leave;
- Pupil's ability to catch up the work;
- Pupil's educational needs;
- General welfare of the pupil;
- Circumstances of the request;
- Purpose of the leave;
- Length of the activity; and
- When the request was made.

58. It is good practice for schools to respond to all requests for a leave of absence in writing giving the reasons for the decision. It is particularly important that letters approving a request clearly state:

- The expected date of return;
- That the parents are expected to contact the school if anything delays the pupil returning to school when expected; and
- What action will be taken if the pupil fails to return when expected.

59. Similarly, a letter refusing a request should explain the reasons for the refusal and what action will be taken if the parents ignore the refusal and keep their child away.

Family Holidays – Paragraph 62 – 68

62. Time off school for **family holidays** is not a right. Schools have discretion to allow up to 10 days absence in a school year for a family holiday if they believe that the circumstances warrant it.

63. Schools may agree up to 10 days “holiday leave” in special circumstances such as:
For service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays outside term-time if the holiday will have minimal disruption to the pupil’s education; and
When a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis.
Holidays which are taken for the following reasons should not be authorised;
Availability of cheap holidays;
Availability of the desired accommodation;
Poor weather experienced in school holiday periods; and
Overlap with beginning or end of term.

64. Whilst the application must be made by the parent(s) that the child normally resides with, there is no restriction on who the holiday is taken with. This is a matter for the parent(s) not the school.

65. If the local code of practice allows, parents can be given a penalty notice or prosecuted for periods of unauthorised holidays.

Walsall’s code of practice allows for parents to be issued with penalty notices or prosecuted for periods of unauthorised holiday.

66. In exceptional circumstances, schools can approve more than 10 days holiday leave – called **extended leave of absence** or **extended holidays**. However, it is worth discussing with parents whether their plans could be changed to overlap with school holidays and thereby reduce the effect on their child’s education.

Extended Leave is an agreed period of absence over and above a ten day period. The agreement is made by the school following a request from a parent. Schools, supported by the LA are discouraged from authorising extended leave and therefore respecting a child’s right to be educated. Families who take their children out of school for extended periods of absence without permission will be contravening legislation and as a result will be exposed to legal action.

67. Leave of absence cannot be aggregated with days that the school is closed.

68. In a small number of cases schools could have concerns about a pupil’s welfare, such as that the pupil will be forced into marriage whilst abroad, in such cases, the school should seek support from their local authority. Further information is at

<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/socialcare/safeguarding/forcedmarriage/>

See Appendix 2

SECTION 4

Recommended Practice

For Walsall Schools, Children's Services and Parents - Including Penalty Notices

Holiday Absence

Walsall Children's Services strongly recommend that Head teachers do not authorise any absence for the purpose of a holiday. It is recommended that applications for extended leave are not granted except in very exceptional circumstances.

Schools will have in place a school policy which has a clearly stated position regarding holiday absence. Policies should also include the level of sanctions which the school and LA will apply to unauthorised holiday absence.

Schools will regularly communicate with parents regarding the position of holiday absence and the impact such absence will have on a child.

Parents of new student intakes will be advised of the schools position of not/authorising holiday absence, including any mid-year admissions.

Parents will be made aware of the damaging impact holiday absence has on the education attainment of their child.

Parents should also be aware of the emotional impact of absence on their children.

Religious Observance

Walsall schools are recommended to abide by DCSF guidance in respect of absence for religious observance. Sections 44 and 45 of Keeping Pupil Registers – June 2008 states, 'Under the regulations, schools must authorise absence that is due to religious observance but the day must be:

Exclusively set apart for religious observance; and
Set apart by the parents' religious body (not the parents)

If the religious body sets apart a **single day** for religious observance and the pupil applies for 4 days leave of absence the school is only required to allow **one day**; the rest is discretionary leave. All requests for discretionary leave must be made in advance by pupils' parents.

See Appendix 3

Authority to Authorise Absence

The High Court has confirmed that it is schools, not parents, who authorise absence.

Walsall procedure for issuing Penalty Notices

Walsall Childrens Services – Serco have a code of conduct for issuing penalty notices where children are apprehended by a truancy patrol, or when a parent removes a child from school for the purpose of a holiday, when absence has not been agreed (authorised) by the school.

The penalty notice fine is initially £50, but if the fine remains unpaid after 28 days the fine increases to £100. If after 42 days the penalty remains unpaid, then the Local Authority will apply

to the courts for a prosecution under sec 444 1 of the Education Act 1996. The fines imposed for this offence are up to £1,000.

Both parents are held responsible in law, and when there is a family of two parents and two children who have unauthorised absence, then the penalty notice fines will be £50 for each parent in respect of both children. Therefore initially the sum of the notices in this case will be £200. If the fine is paid between 29th day, from date of issue, and 42nd day then the sum of the notices for two parents and two children will be £400.

Likewise, prosecution taken through the Magistrates Court will be in respect of each child and for both parents. So again for two parents / two children the maximum fine is £5,000.

Requests for Leave.

The following is guidance for schools in circumstances where parents request leave.

In the first instance schools should write to all parents to inform them that any requests for leave will not be granted, as of a right – all requests should be made in writing, or in person to a senior member of staff. **Model Letter - 1**

Any leave requests may be referred to the Education Welfare Officer in order for the Education Welfare Officer to send out a Warning Letter. **Model Letter 5**

If unauthorised holiday is taken then, the Education Welfare Service (EWS) may issue a penalty notice. (EWOREF to be completed) **Appendix 8**

Any extended leave should be referred to the EWS via Extended Leave Notification Form for recording on a central database. **See Appendix 7 Education Welfare Service Extended Leave Notification Form.**

****It is recommended that schools do not keep standard 'holiday request forms', but encourage requests by letter or personal appointment. Parents should be advised, accordingly and schools update their school attendance policy.***

Samples of suggested letters can be found within the "Model Letters"

Case Studies

The Impact of Unauthorised Holiday

Charlotte – A Case Study of a Year 6 Pupil

Charlotte – Date of Birth August 1998

Charlotte is currently a registered pupil of compulsory school age attending a Walsall School.

Family History

Charlotte lives at home with her parents.

Charlotte is the youngest child of four siblings

Heather age 23

Robert age 19

James age 14

Charlotte age 10

Charlotte and James are the only children at home since Heather and Robert left the family home. Charlotte's parents are in their early 50's.

Mom and Dad are currently unemployed however; Dad is a registered carer for Mom who suffers with depression. Both parents do not seem to value the importance of education and regular school attendance due to the fact they are willing to take Charlotte out of school on unauthorised term time holidays.

School History

Primary School

When Charlotte and James attended the same primary school, at the beginning of a new academic school year the attendance levels of both children were good. However looking back over their time at primary school there seemed to be a clear pattern of absence during the months after their parents had taken them out of school on an unauthorised holiday.

Charlotte's yearly attendance levels:

Year 6 2008/2009 = 81% (holidays & illness) Year 5 2007/2008 = 75% (holiday & illness)

Year 4 2006/2007 = 78% (holidays & illness) Year 3 2005/2006 = 80% (holidays & illness)

Year 2 2004/2005 = 83% (holidays & illness) Year 1 2003/2004 = 89% (holidays & illness)

After James left Primary to move to secondary school his attendance improved. This was due to the fact that this school implemented an unauthorised term time holiday policy. This means that parents would be issued with a penalty notice if the holiday was not approved by the school. In my opinion I felt that this acted as a deterrent to the family.

This policy had had an affect on James attendance because he was not taken out of school for holidays and stayed at home with a family member. His attendance improved and daily routines at school continued to have regular continuity.

Unfortunately Charlotte was still taken out of school on an unauthorised holiday.

This continual pattern of Charlotte's low attendance at school impacted upon her attainment levels. Charlotte's teacher felt that charlotte had fallen behind academically, socially and emotionally.

Charlotte is a likable child who would achieve excellent examination result if she were to attend school regularly.

Charlotte's teacher had predicted that Charlotte would have easily achieved a level 3.

This attainment level means that when Charlotte moved to secondary school she will be placed into lower ability groups. This in turn could result in Charlotte never reaching her full potential due to poor attendance levels and unauthorised holidays.

This level of poor attendance has had a detrimental impact on Charlotte's ability to achieve good grades in her SATS examinations. I feel that Charlotte's parents have not understood the full effect that the holidays in term time and poor attendance have had on Charlotte's education.

Simon – A Case Study of a Year 9 Pupil

Simon lives at home with his parents and two younger siblings in a fairly stable environment. His parents (who were low achievers at school) offer passive support to school and to Simon's education.

Simon made steady progress at primary school. His behaviour was erratic on occasions but was managed well by school staff. He eventually played regularly in the schools football and cricket team's and was a member of the School Council. Simon attended school regularly and punctually – his only absences were for periods of genuine illness with his annual percentage attendance always between 92% and 96%. With consistent support and encouragement from his teachers he reached average attainment levels in Maths, English and science in his Year 6 SATs tests reflecting his positive efforts and attitude.

Simon moved to the local Community Technology College where he settled quickly and socialised well. His behaviour became more challenging but this was managed and channelled by experienced staff through sporting and other extra curricular activities. Throughout Year 7 he arrived at school punctually and his attendance for that period was 95% - his only absences being for authorised medical reasons. With the support of his Form Tutor, Head of Year and subject teachers he continued to maintain his average attainment levels.

This progress continued until the summer term of Year 8 when Simon started to arrive late for registration with his Form Tutor. He also truanted on a few occasions with two other pupils. This change of behaviour and attitude was soon identified and brought to the attention of his parents who agreed to support school staff in their efforts to help Simon fulfil his maximum educational potential. At this stage Simon was predicted to achieve levels 5-6 in all subjects in Year 9 SATs tests.

Soon after Simon started in Year 9 his parents decided to take a three week family holiday abroad in term-time against the advice of school staff. When Simon returned to school he found that he had fallen behind with important subject and course work and faced the daunting task of making up that lost ground. He started to take days off from school, condoned by parents, for "head-aches, stomach upsets etc." Because of his fluctuating attendance he was no longer a regular member of school sports teams and was less active in other social activities. He regularly failed to attend registration with his form tutor thus missing important notices and advice. His parents eventually accepted that he was also increasingly truanting from school. He was also absent for a period for genuine medical reasons in January / February when schools nationally were hit by flu bugs and viral infections. This accrued absence meant that by the end of spring term his attendance was only 77%.

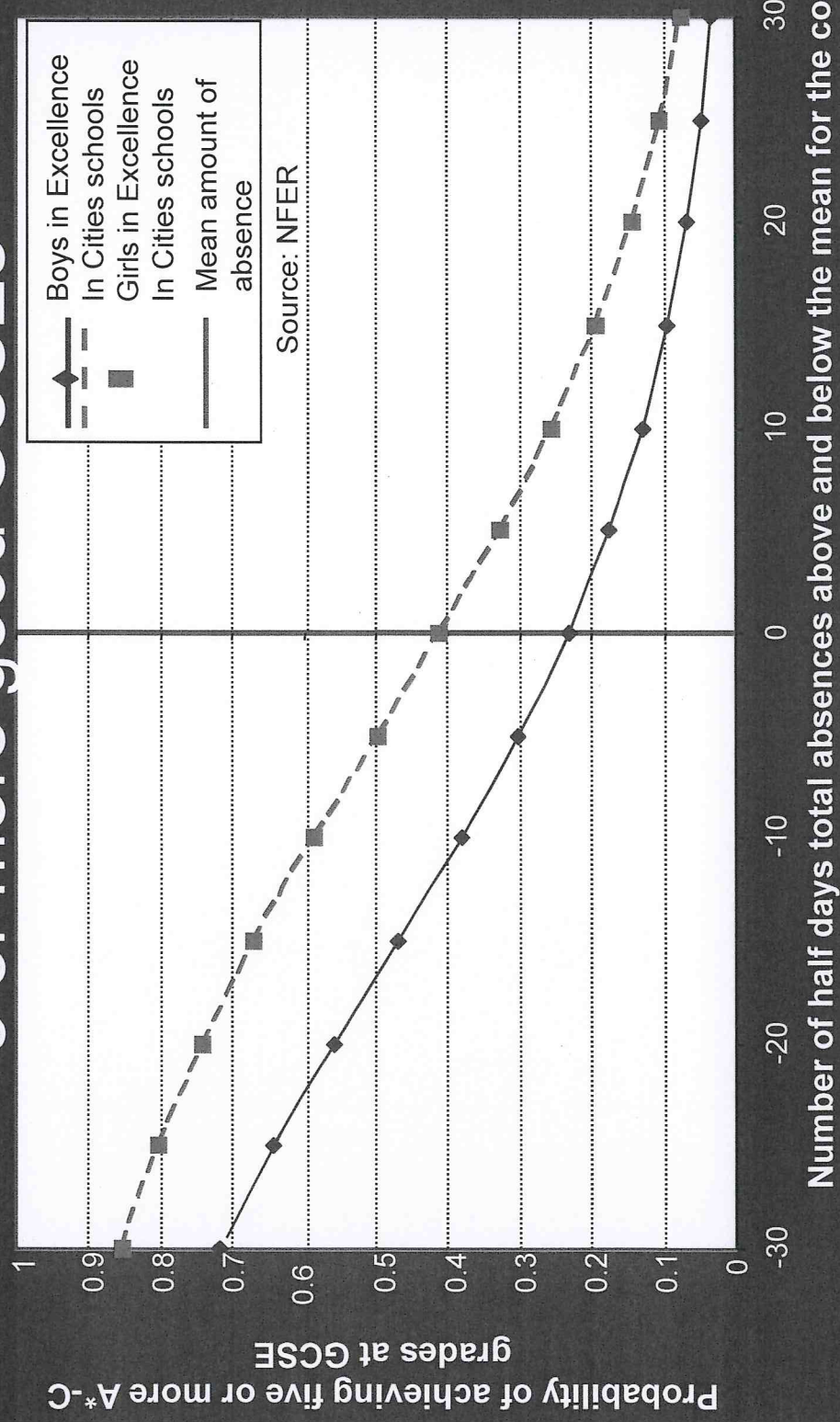
The outcome was that by May of Year 9 Simon's expected National Curriculum Attainment levels has dropped dramatically. He had been predicted to reach level 5 in 5 subjects and level almost level 6 in 7 subjects. He was now predicted to reach level 2 in one subject, level 3 in 5 subjects and level 4 in 6 subjects. All his peers who attended regularly were on target for their predicted grades.

A further outcome for the family is that his siblings have started feigning illness to avoid attending school and his parents have received warning letters from the Local Education Authority advising them that they may be prosecuted for failing to ensure Simon's regular attendance at school. This sad situation was obviously triggered by the parental decision to take a lengthy holiday in term-time.



Quantitative analysis of amino acids

Probability of a pupil achieving 5 or more good GCSEs



department for
children, schools and families

every lesson
counts!

Appendix 2 - Home Office Guidance for Forced Marriage

Appendix 3 – Guidance in respect of Religious Observance

Appendix 4 – Guidance for Removal from Registers

Appendix 5 – Keeping Pupils Registers


Walsall Council
Walsall Children's Services

Education Welfare Service Extended Leave Notification

Name of Child:		Date of Birth:	Gender		Male (Please tick)	Female (Please tick)
			Class / Form:			
School:						
EWO		UPN:				
Parent's/Guardians Full Names:						
Mother:			Father:			
Address/Contact:				Address/Contact:		
<u>Date of extended leave:</u> / /	<u>No. of school days</u>	<u>Date of intended return:</u> / /	<u>Country travelled to:</u>	Child returned to school by agreed return date?		<u>Date returned</u> / /
						<u>Date pupil taken off roll:</u> / /
Comments or any additional information:						

Appendix 8 – Information for Parents



Walsall Council

Walsall Children's Services

serco

Penalty Notices

Walsall Childrens Services – Serco have a code of conduct for issuing penalty notices where children are apprehended by a truancy patrol, or when a parent removes a child from school for the purpose of a holiday, when absence has not been agreed (authorised) by the school.

The penalty notice fine is initially £50, but if the fine remains unpaid after 28 days the fine increases to £100. If after 42 days the penalty remains unpaid, then the Local Authority will apply to the courts for a prosecution under sec 444 1 of the Education Act 1996. The fines imposed for this offence are up to £1,000.

Both parents are held responsible in law, and when there is a family of two parents and two children who have unauthorised absence, then the penalty notice fines will be £50 for each parent in respect of both children. Therefore initially the sum of the notices in this case will be £200.

If the fine is paid between 29th day, from date of issue, and 42nd day then the sum of the notices for two parents and two children will be £400.

Likewise, prosecution taken through the Magistrates Court will be in respect of each child and for both parents. So again for two parents / two children the maximum fine will be £5,000.

Model Letters

List of letter headings

1. Draft Zero Tolerance PN etc
2. Holiday Absence Authorised Due to Extenuating Circumstances
3. Failure to Return from Extended Leave
4. Holiday Refusal No Penalty Notice
5. Holiday Refusal Penalty Notice
6. Unauthorised Holiday Warning Letter
7. Deletion from Pupil Roll
8. School Policy on Term Time Holidays
9. Extended Leave Notification
10. School Sample Letters

MODEL LETTER 1

Draft Zero Tolerance Penalty Notice

SCHOOL LETTER HEADED PAPER

Dear Parent

I am writing to inform you that we are no longer authorising holiday absence. All future holiday requests will not be granted, unless in exceptional circumstances, as agreed by myself. Any absence due to holidays taken without the head teachers' permission will now be recorded as unauthorised, and may result in the issue of a Penalty Notice.

In any cases of exceptional circumstances, all holiday requests should be submitted to myself in a letter, stating the reasons for your request.

Should you have any queries, relating to this matter please contact me or alternatively you may wish to discuss with the Educational Welfare Service, who can be contacted on 01922 686233.

Head Teacher

MODEL LETTER 2

Holiday Absence Authorised Due to Extenuating Circumstances

SCHOOL LETTER HEADED PAPER

Dear Parent

With reference to your recent request for a holiday absence during Term0time for (CHILDS NAME) I can confirm the following.

After considering your application and due to the extenuating circumstances for this request I am able to authorise your request, on this occasion. However, I must point out that any absence can be detrimental to a child's academic progress and some children find it difficult to catch up on missed work when they return.

I have agreed the following dates, which will be shown in the attendance register as authorised absence.

Name of child/ren _____

Class / form _____

Dates:

From: _____ To: _____

Total number of days: _____

MODEL LETTER 3

Failure to Return from Extended Leave

SCHOOL LETTER HEADED PAPER

Dear Parents

I have recently agreed for CHILDS NAME to have authorised absence from school until DATE OF DUE RETURN.

However, CHILDS NAME has not returned to school as agreed, and I must inform you that unless he/she returns to school by DATE (two weeks after due return date) then I will refer this matter to the Local Authority. I must inform you that this may lead to CHILDS NAME being deleted from both admissions and the attendance register, which means his/her place will be offered to another child on our waiting list.

I would urge you to contact me (NAME [nominated member of staff]) to discuss this matter further

Further to this I must inform you that at anytime the EWO or school may contact one of the following organisations if the circumstances warrant it:

- Safeguarding team
- Police
- Forced Marriage Unit at the Home Office

I will write to you again, if I am advised to delete CHILDS NAME from the school register.

YS

MODEL LETTER 4

Holiday Refusal No Penalty Notice

SCHOOL LETTER HEADED PAPER

Dear

I am writing with reference to your recent request for a Holiday during Term-Time for (Childs Name)

After considering you application, I regret I am unable to authorise your request, and should you take your child out of School regardless, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and the Education Welfare Service will be informed, who may take further action.

YS

MODEL LETTER 5

Holiday Refusal Penalty Notice

SCHOOL LETTER HEADED PAPER

Dear

I am writing with reference to your recent request for a Holiday during Term-Time for (Childs Name).

After considering your application, I regret I am unable to authorise your request, and should you take your child out of School regardless, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and the Education Welfare Service will be informed, who may issue you with a Penalty Notice.

Y S

MODEL LETTER 6

Unauthorised Holiday Warning Letter

SCHOOL LETTER HEADED PAPER

Dear

It has been brought to my attention that your child has been absent for () days for a family holiday.

Term Time holidays are recorded as an unauthorised absence and therefore matter may be referred to the Education Welfare Service who will monitor your child's future attendance; any further unauthorised absences may result in legal actions as detailed below.

Under Section 444 of the education Act 1996 parents of a child of compulsory school age are under a legal duty to ensure the regular attendance of that child at the school where he/she is a registered pupil. Failure to fulfil this duty may result in the Local Education Authority prosecuting the parents, if found guilty of the offence, each parent could be fined up to £2,500 and / or sentenced to 3 months imprisonment. The parent may alternatively be subject to a penalty fine of £50.

Absence during term-time as a result of term-time holidays interrupts continuity of teaching and learning, disrupts the educational progress of individual children and creates disruption in schools. Guidance from the department for Children, Schools and Families, states that holidays in Term-Time are not an entitlement and parents cannot expect leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday to be granted as a right.

MODEL LETTER 7

Unauthorised Holiday Warning Letter

SCHOOL LETTER HEADED PAPER

Dear

After extensive investigations I am unable to trace the whereabouts of NAME OF CHILD

In accordance with national guidance for applying registration regulations I have deleted the following children's name from the admissions and attendance registers at our school.

The local authorities have been informed. Should you require a new school place, may I refer you to Primary admissions who will advise you of your nearest school who have available places in the relevant year group, they can be contacted on 01922 686200.

YS

MODEL LETTER 8

School Policy on Term Time Holidays

ADVISORY LETTER

SCHOOL LETTER HEADED PAPER

To the parents of

Childs Name is about to join our school and I would like to take this opportunity to explain our School Policy on Holidays in Term Time.

We do not authorise Holidays in Term Time for the following reasons:-

- Absence interrupts the continuity of teaching and learning
- Absence disrupts the education progress of individual children and creates disruption in schools
- Absence can make it difficult for children to settle into friendship groups and establish a sense of belonging with their peers.
- Absence delays the development of Social Skills which are necessary for your child's development
- Guidance from the department for Children, Schools and Families states that Holidays in Term Time are not an entitlement and parents cannot expect leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday to be granted as of right.

I am sure that as parents you are keen for your child to settle quickly and happily into school life and give them every opportunity to develop and achieve as individuals.

With this in mind you are asked to ensure regular school attendance, and that you do not take holidays during school time.

YS

Absence by Council Ward 2007 - 2008								
Aldridge Central & South								
School	Overall Absence %		Authorised Absence %		Unauthorised Absence %		PA	
	%	Sessions	%	sessions	%	sessions	overall	
Cooper & Jordan CE Primary	4238	3.96%	3.88%	4146	0.09%	92		
Leighswood	5617	4.51%	4.38%	5466	0.12%	151		
St Mary of the Angels Catholic Primary	2407	4.42%	4.33%	2361	0.08%	46		
Whetstone Field Primary	1729	3.09%	3.08%	1723	0.01%	6		
Aldridge School - A Science College	24068	6.28%	5.55%	21251	0.74%	2817		
St Francis of Assisi Catholic	15848	5.98%	5.08%	13441	0.91%	2407		
Absence by Council Ward 2007 - 2008								
Aldridge North & Walsall Wood								
School	Overall Absence %		Authorised Absence %		Unauthorised Absence %		PA	
	%	Sessions	%	sessions	%	sessions	overall	
Oakwood		9500	22.80%		0.21%			
Castlefort JMI	7.58%	3329	7.42%	3259	0.16%	70	7.41	9.2
St John's CE Primary	4.83%	3804	4.75%	3744	0.08%	60		
Walsall Wood	5.94%	2643	5.85%	2604	0.09%	39		
Shire Oak - A Science College	8.37%	29204	7.94%	27707	0.43%	1497	8.32	8.1

Absence by Council Ward 2007 - 2008								
Short Heath								
School	Overall Absence %		Authorised Absence %		Unauthorised Absence %		PA	
	%	Sessions	%	sessions	%	sessions	overall	
Lane Head Nursery								
Old Hall		9630	27.40%		11.60%			
Lodge Farm JMI	6.52%	4814	5.99%	4421	0.53%	393	6.63	3.8
Pool Hayes Primary	5.11%	2466	4.67%	2253	0.44%	213		
Rosedale CE Infant	5.55%	1670	4.74%	1427	0.81%	243		
Short Heath Junior	5.42%	3502	4.54%	2974	0.88%	568		
Woodlands Primary	5.64%	5213	5.14%	4752	0.50%	461		
Pool Hayes Community	8.21%	25708	6.69%	20946	1.52%	4762	7.93	7.6
Willenhall School Sports College	7.63%	29864	5.75%	22504	1.88%	7360		
Absence by Council Ward 2007 - 2008								
St Matthew's								
School	Overall Absence %		Authorised Absence %		Unauthorised Absence %		PA	
	%	Sessions	%	sessions	%	sessions	overall	
Blue Coat CE Infant	6.74%	2984	5.42%	2399	1.32%	585	6.63	4.2
Blue Coat CE Junior	5.01%	4794	4.23%	4052	0.77%	742	4.9	2.7
Butts Primary	7.41%	3814	6.98%	3592	0.43%	222	7.53	4.5
Caldmore Community Primary	8.29%	4254	7.97%	4090	0.32%	164	9.06	9.2
St Mary's the Mount Catholic	4.06%	2185	4.06%	2185	0.00%	0		
Whitehall Junior	6.88%	5720	6.76%	5614	0.13%	106	6.96	5.1
Blue Coat CE Performing Arts	7.52%	17225	5.72%	13110	1.80%	4115	7.74	7.6
Queen Mary's High	2.60%	3755	2.28%	3303	0.31%	452		

Absence by Council Ward 2007 - 2008	
Ward 1	1
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Ward 3	1
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Ward 100	1

Bentley & Darlaston North		
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[illegible]

Absence by Council Ward 2007 - 2008	
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Birchills Leamore		
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[illegible]

Absence by Council Ward 2007 - 2008

Blakenall

[illegible]

Absence by Council Ward 2007 - 2008

Bloxwich East

[illegible]

Absence by Council Ward 2007 - 2008								
Bloxwich West								
School	Overall Absence %		Authorised Absence %		Unauthorised Absence %		PA	
	%	Sessions	%	sessions	%	sessions	overall	
Sandbank Nursery								
Castle Business & Enterprise College		16112	48.20%		10.10%			
Phoenix		1576	40.00%		14.00%			
Abbey Primary	5.72%	2177	5.71%	2173	0.01%	4		
Bloxwich CE JMI	5.68%	4460	5.06%	3974	0.62%	486	5.83	3.4
Busill Jones Primary	6.53%	4079	5.36%	3346	1.17%	733	6.24	4.9
Elmore Green Primary	5.98%	4520	5.86%	4434	0.11%	86	5.89	3.5
Mossley Primary	7.03%	3619	6.86%	3531	0.17%	88	7.18	3.3
Sneyd Community	9.11%	24504	8.11%	21808	1.00%	2696	9.62	10.9
Absence by Council Ward 2007 - 2008								
Brownhills								
School	Overall Absence %		Authorised Absence %		Unauthorised Absence %		PA	
	%	Sessions	%	sessions	%	sessions	overall	
Ogley Hay Nursery								
Brownhills West Primary	6.47%	2447	6.17%	2333	0.30%	114		
Holy Trinity CE Primary	4.37%	2255	4.32%	2229	0.05%	26		
Millfield Primary	6.04%	2790	5.76%	2662	0.28%	128		
St Bernadette's Catholic Primary	4.20%	1807	3.60%	1552	0.59%	255		
St James Primary	5.75%	2597	5.15%	2325	0.60%	272		
Watling Street JMI	5.08%	2407	4.58%	2168	0.50%	239		
Brownhills Community Tech College	7.91%	17059	7.25%	15628	0.66%	1431	7.95	8.1

Absence by Council Ward 2007 - 2008

Darlaston South

[illegible]

Absence by Council Ward 2007 - 2008

Paddock

[illegible]

Absence by Council Ward 2007 - 2008

Pheasey Park Farm

[illegible]

Absence by Council Ward 2007 - 2008

[illegible]

Absence by Council Ward 2007 - 2008

[illegible]

Absence by Council Ward 2007 - 2008

Pleck								
School	Overall Absence %		Authorised Absence %		Unauthorised Absence %		PA	
	%	Sessions	%	sessions	%	sessions	overall	
Alumwell Nursery								
Alumwell Infant	6.59%	3163	5.71%	2740	0.88%	423	6.19	2.8
Alumwell Junior	6.27%	6243	5.49%	5458	0.79%	785		
Bentlery Drive JMI	7.17%	6158	7.16%	6144	0.02%	14	7.43	3.6
Hillary Primary	5.48%	4707	4.75%	4079	0.73%	628	5.41	3.6
Alumwell Business & Enterprise	9.26%	20716	1.41%	17552	1.41%	3164	9.5	10.2

Absence by Council Ward 2007 - 2008

Rushall-Sheffield								
School	Overall Absence %		Authorised Absence %		Unauthorised Absence %		PA	
	%	Sessions	%	sessions	%	sessions	overall	
Elmwood		3542	55.70%		10.60%			
Greenfield Primary	5.04%	3254	4.75%	3067	0.29%	187	5.11	2.6
Radleys Primary	6.52%	3261	6.02%	3012	0.50%	249		
Rushall JMI	5.74%	2805	4.43%	2164	1.31%	641		
St Francis Catholic Primary	4.20%	3123	2.96%	1503	1.24%	629		
Sheffield Community Academy	8.17%	27352	7.19%	24058	0.98%	3294		
New Leaf Centre								

Absence by Council Ward 2007 - 2008

Short Heath

School	Overall Absence %		Authorised Absence %		Unauthorised Absence %		PA	
	%	Sessions	%	sessions	%	sessions	overall	
Lane Head Nursery								
Old Hall		9630	27.40%		11.60%			
Lodge Farm JMI	6.52%	4814	5.99%	4421	0.53%	393	6.63	3.8
Pool Hayes Primary	5.11%	2466	4.67%	2253	0.44%	213		
Rosedale CE Infant	5.55%	1670	4.74%	1427	0.81%	243		
Short Heath Junior	5.42%	3502	4.54%	2974	0.88%	568		
Woodlands Primary	5.64%	5213	5.14%	4752	0.50%	461		
Pool Hayes Community	8.21%	25708	6.69%	20946	1.52%	4762	7.93	7.6
Willenhall School Sports College	7.63%	29864	5.75%	22504	1.88%	7360		

Absence by Council Ward 2007 - 2008

St Matthew's

School	Overall Absence %		Authorised Absence %		Unauthorised Absence %		PA	
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Blue Coat CE Infant	6.74%	2984	5.42%	2399	1.32%	585	6.63	4.2
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Queen Mary's High	2.60%	3755	2.28%	3303	0.31%	452		

Absence by Council Ward 2007 - 2008

[illegible]

Absence by Council Ward 2007 - 2008

[illegible]

Willenhall South

[illegible]

Absence for 2007 - 2008

[illegible]

Fixed Penalty Notices 2007 -2008

Council Ward	School	Paid	Directed to Court
Aldridge North & Walsall Wood	Castlefort	1	0
	Shire Oak	0	2
Blakenall	Blakenall	0	2
	Christchurch CE	2	2
	Harden Primary	0	6
	St Thomas of Canterbury	4	0
Bentley Darlaston North	Bentley West	7	2
Birchills Leamore	Hatherton Primary	9	3
	St Particks	2	0
Bloxwich East	Little Bloxwich	4	0
	Lower Farm Primary	0	2
Bloxwich West	Elmore Green Primary	1	0
	Mossley Primary	1	0
	Sneyd Community	3	0
Brownhills	St James Primary	16	5
Pleck	Alumwell Business	1	0
Rushall - Shelfield	Shelfield Community	3	4
Short Heath	Lodge Farm	2	0
	Pool Hayes	5	1
	Woodlands	0	4
St Matthews	Blue Coat Infant	1	2
Streetly	Streetly Sports College	2	4
Willenhall North	Beacon Primary	3	0
	New Invention	2	2
Willenhall South	St Thomas More	2	0