



INSPIRE BELIEVE CHALLENGE ACHIEVE



# Willow Fields Primary School

Thursday 16th May 2019

[www.willowfieldscommunityprimary.org.uk](http://www.willowfieldscommunityprimary.org.uk)

Dear Parents and Carers, - I just wanted to take the opportunity to discuss attendance with you all.



As you may remember, the chair of governors and I sent a letter to all parents earlier in the year to outline our attendance policy and the steps that we wanted to take to improve attendance. However, despite repeated pleas and encouragement, as well as invitations for families to meet with myself and Attendance 100 for attendance management meetings, school continues to struggle with attendance across all classes. It is really important that every child attends every day that they can. This is something that the Department for

Education and Ofsted monitor and it is important to the school that attendance is the best it can be as it demonstrates that the children are accessing their full education. The children get very upset if they miss school and then have to catch up and it can even affect their friendship groups. If there is a legitimate reason for absence then please let the office know ASAP each day that your child is going to be away from school or provide school with medical evidence. If your child feels a little unwell, send them into school as they often feel better later and we will let you know if they become too poorly to stay for the full day. If your child is poorly—please telephone the office between 8.30am- 9am to explain the reason for their absence otherwise it will be unauthorised.

However, due to repeated and persistent absence we have had to make the very difficult decision to refer a few of our families to the Educational Attendance Officers at the council where they will impose a fixed penalty fine and may even prosecute parents for poor attendance (in line with the schools attendance policy). This was obviously a difficult decision for governors to take as we always want to work with parents to make sure that the children are attending school each and every day. Sadly, some families continue to be reluctant to work with us to improve attendance and this is the final step that we can take. Please work with us to raise attendance in school!

School is also struggling with attendance due to the number of holidays that are being requested. Currently with holidays that have been taken and the holidays that have been requested until July, over 359 sessions of learning will be lost which is the same as 180 school days. While we understand the need to have quality family time, school can not authorise these holidays which come on top of the 13 weeks of holidays the children already have per year. Therefore, governors have reluctantly taken the decision to apply to the council to impose a fixed penalty fine of £60 per parent in the household, per child of school age in the household, for parents taking their children out of school for holidays in school time. This will be imposed for children of school age (5 years and over) who are taken out of school for additional holidays of 20 sessions (10 full consecutive school days).

Miss Phillips has also noticed that there are many children who come to school late and enter through the office. Staff are in the yards from 8.40am and the gates are open until 8.55am. Please make sure that the children are in the yard in plenty of time so that they can line up with their friends. The office is a really busy place in the morning and this would really help us—thank you!

There has also been an increase in the number of children who bring their dinner money on a daily basis. The payment day for dinner money is a Monday morning. Please make sure that any dinner money for the week is paid on Monday morning so that it can be banked and accurate dinner numbers can be given to the kitchen. If you think that you may be eligible for free school meals—please make an application on the Sunderland Council Website.

School has also had many exciting things happening in the last couple of weeks and this week is no exception. We have paid for ZooLab to come into school on Friday 17th May as a treat for all of the hard work the children have been doing! ZooLab come into school and will work with every year group looking at animals including snakes, rats, spiders and beetles! The children will have the chance to hold the animals and ask questions of their keepers! It will be very exciting and I am sure there will be lots of Piccollages on Facebook and the website for you to look at!



This week the Year 6 children have been completing their SAT tests and I couldn't be prouder of their hard work and their attitudes. They are so competitive and are trying their very hardest to be the best that they can be. I can't believe that they will be moving on soon to their new schools and in the coming weeks staff from those schools will be popping in to meet the children. We have lots of fun planned for them from the end of June as this is when their assessments will be completed. Watch this space!

The children in nursery and reception have started their dance classes on a Wednesday morning and they absolutely love them! It's great to see them wiggle and dance and there are some definite stars in the class! Please complete a form to be a friend on Facebook so that you can see how much fun they are having for yourselves! They have also been excited to play in their new boats too! Thanks to Miss Hunter for getting the boats for them—they have been a big hit with the children and its lovely to see them using their imagination when playing. Thank you too to all parents who have been working with the nursery and reception children at home with their homework—their pictures and work are being displayed in the classes and they look lovely! We really have some superstars in EYFS! This includes the staff too as they have all worked hard to gain the ICAN accreditation which means that our EYFS is recognised as providing an excellent, communication rich environment for our children to learn in—so well done to all!



Next week we will be having our sports days as it is our healthy living week! The children will be learning about how to keep themselves safe and healthy, including online safety! We have decided to hold sports days now as the weather is lovely and not too hot. Last year when we had them in July the children were too hot and bothered so we thought we would try to do them earlier. The dates for the sports days are—

EYFS—Tuesday 21st May 2019 9.15am

KS1— Thursday 23rd May 2019 9.15am

KS2—Friday 24th May 2019 9.15am We hope that you can join us and watch the children compete in their events!

There have been many questions about staff applying sunscreen to children. Unfortunately due to safeguarding staff are unable to apply sun-cream to children. However, there are many brands of sun-cream that are effective for up to 8 hours so this can be applied before school and will last for the whole school day! We try to get the children out of their classrooms as much as we can to learn in the outdoors so if it is possible, please could you send your child / children into school with a sun hat or cap too as although we love the sunshine—we don't want the children to burn.



School breaks up for a week on Friday 24th May and the children will return on Monday 3rd June. In the last half term the children will receive their end of year reports and there will be a parent drop in for you to speak to the staff as well as review meetings for the parents of any child who had additional needs. Mr Dawson will be in touch soon to arrange appointments. We also look forward to sharing the plans for the new school in the autumn term as the plans are being developed and I am sure that you will like what is being proposed for the new school opening in September 2021!

I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your many kind comments about school and staff. We love to receive feedback and lately there has been a lot of positive comments shared with staff either in person or on Facebook. We are collecting these comments and have put them onto a big board in the staffroom that we call our 'smile board' and I just wanted to say thank you for taking the time to share these comments with us! They are very much appreciated.

If you have any suggestions for what you would like to see in school or what you would like us to provide for the children as we move forward—we would love to hear them! Mrs Robertson