



Wittersham Church of England Primary School



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Headteacher: Mrs Stella Coulson

19th May 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope that this letter finds you well.

I wanted to take a moment to write to all families regarding attendance and the importance of children being in school every day. As we all know, regular attendance has a significant impact on children's academic progress, emotional wellbeing, friendships and sense of belonging within the school community. Even missing a small number of school days can quickly add up and lead to gaps in learning.

As a school, we have worked hard to support families by adjusting our term dates where possible to provide longer holiday periods and help reduce the need for requests for leave during term time. Despite this, we are continuing to receive a high number of requests for holidays during school time.

I would like to be very clear that term-time holidays are not authorised under Department for Education (DfE) and Kent County Council (KCC) guidance, unless there are truly exceptional circumstances. In most cases, family holidays will be recorded as unauthorised absence. The only occasions where absence may be authorised are exceptional events such as attending a funeral or a close family wedding, and even then, only the actual date(s) of the event will usually be authorised.

Please know that this is not the school "being difficult". Schools are required to follow national attendance guidance and local authority procedures. As Headteacher, I have a legal duty to follow these expectations consistently.

Under current guidance, penalty notices may be issued where unauthorised absence thresholds are met. Fines are issued by the Local Authority, not by the school. Currently, this is £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days, increasing to £160 if paid within 28 days. Repeated offences may result in further legal action.

It is also important to note that any payments made through penalty notices go directly to the Local Authority and not to the school.

We are directed by KCC regarding when penalty notices should be requested and therefore must follow this process in line with statutory guidance.

I am hopeful that this gives a little insight into the process and the reasons behind these decisions. We truly value the support of our families and appreciate your understanding as we work together to prioritise children's education and wellbeing.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the school office.

Yours sincerely,

Stella Coulson

Headteacher

Wittersham Church of England School

Compassion Courage Cooperation

'On a voyage of discovery; learning and growing together in the light of God.'



National Nurturing
School Award
2024