

Willingham Primary School



Attendance Policy

October 2018

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Contents

1. Aims	3
2. Legislation and guidance	3
3. School procedures	3
4. Authorised and unauthorised absence	5
5. Strategies for promoting attendance	6
6. Attendance monitoring	6
7. Roles and responsibilities	6
8. Monitoring arrangements	7
9. Links with other policies	7
Appendix 1: attendance codes	8

1. Aims

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence

Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled

Acting early to address patterns of absence

The school categorises attendance as follows:

- 100% - excellent
- 95% to 99.9% - on track
- 90% to 94.9% - a concern, may hinder learning and social progress
- 89.9% and below - a significant concern, very likely to hinder learning and social progress

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- [The Education Act 1996](#)
- [The Education Act 2002](#)
- [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2010](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2011](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. School procedures

3.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry

- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school between 8.40am and 8.50am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.50am and will be kept open until 9.20. The register for the second session will be taken at the start of the afternoon session and will be kept open for 30 minutes.

3.2 Unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health as soon as practically possible (see also section 6).

Parents are able to ring and leave a message before the school office is open, use Parentmail, email the school office, phone to speak to a member of staff after 8.30 am or call in person to let the school know their child will be absent.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, text message appointment, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. Other circumstances where medical evidence may be required is if this has been agreed as part of a Parent Contract with the Education Welfare Officer or if the child/family is open to social care. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this.

3.3 Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Parents should notify the school in advance of a medical or dental appointment via the office.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

3.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

Where children are regularly late, or there is a particular pattern of lateness, this will be monitored and parents contacted by letter to identify the issue. Support through the class teacher or by referral to other agencies will be offered as appropriate.

3.5 Following up absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

3.6 Reporting to parents

Attendance is included in written reports which are sent home to parents at two points during the school year. Letters will be sent to parents if their child's attendance becomes a concern and parents may be invited to informal or formal meetings to discuss their child's attendance.

4. Authorised and unauthorised absence

4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances' and is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3

Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart. This does not include days of a festival that are not specifically for religious observance.

Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school in advance but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision elsewhere.

Examples of unauthorised absence include term time holidays, either as weeks, long weekends or individual days. The school year allows for 14 weeks when family holidays can be taken and the school expects holidays to be taken in these weeks.

The school monitors attendance and reviews the reasons for absence for all children with attendance less than 90%. Parents are informed by letter of concerns and may also be invited into school to discuss attendance with the Deputy Headteacher or Headteacher. For children whose attendance is a particular concern, monitoring is undertaken on a more frequent basis, including weekly.

4.2 Legal sanctions

Schools are expected to make referrals to the Local Authority for a Penalty Notice in relation to unauthorised absence, specifically in relation to term time holiday and the school will refer all unauthorised term time holidays of six or more consecutive sessions (3+ days) within a four week period where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a penalty notice, individual parents with day to day parenting responsibility must pay £60 per child within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year

One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission

Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent.

5. Strategies for promoting attendance

The school takes regular attendance very seriously and expects, except in the case of genuine illness or exceptional circumstances, every child to attend school every day of the school year. Evidence nationally shows the negative impact of absence on children's academic attainment. School data also shows that children with lower attendance do not achieve as well as those with higher attendance.

Each week, the class with the highest attendance is rewarded in the Celebration assembly, as is the class with the highest punctuality.

Other incentives for high attendance are put in place on an individual basis in agreement with parents.

6. Attendance monitoring

The attendance officer monitors pupil absence on a weekly basis. The school meets with the Education Welfare Officer on a half termly basis to consider attendance across the school and for individual children.

Parents are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2). Parents are expected to call the office each day of the illness, unless the school have requested absence due to sickness, or an infectious disease.

If the school knows of no reason why a child is absent, and the child's parent/carer has not been in contact with the school to explain the reason for absence, the school will call the home number given to check the reasons for absence. If no contact can be made, the school will try again, and if still no contact is made, other contacts on the data collection sheet provided by parents/carers will be contacted.

If a pupil's absence goes above five days we will contact the parents to discuss the reasons for this.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with governors.

Attendance data for each child is stored on SIMS. This is inputted by teachers during twice daily registers and by office staff, giving further detail, if a child is absent. Attendance is analysed using the SIMS system to track attendance of individuals, groups (eg Pupil premium, ethnicity, language spoken, prior attendance, classes or year groups). Such analysis supports the attendance monitoring undertaken by the Attendance Officer in conjunction with the Deputy Head and Education Welfare Officer.

7. Roles and responsibilities

7.1 The governing body

The governing body is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

7.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.

The headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

7.3 The attendance officer

The attendance officer:

Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level

Reports concerns about attendance to the headteacher/deputy headteacher

Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence

Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues

Advises the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

7.4 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a twice daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office. Where a child is absent, the teachers would normally code this as N and the office staff will follow this up.

7.5 Office staff

Office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the senior leadership team. At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our child protection and safeguarding policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness

M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day