

Willingham Primary School



Attendance Policy

February 2022

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NB: for any short-term or temporary adjustments to the attendance procedures or policy, as experienced during the Covid pandemic, parents/carers will be notified via email.



1. Aims

At Willingham Primary School, we passionately believe our mission is to provide the knowledge, the experiences and the confidence in order to excel at secondary school so the pupils can make the choices, now and in the future, to have happy and fulfilling lives. We believe this is an entitlement for every child at our school. For this reason, we will always work towards the goal of 100% attendance for all children.

We aim to meet our obligation and our goal 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
- 96% to 99.9% - good attendance
- 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 are committed to supporting and working with parents/carers where necessary, 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:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#) (and [2010](#), [2011](#), [2013](#), [2016](#) amendments)
- [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. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 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. Summary attendance figures are part of the Headteacher's report to Governors at least termly.

In addition to this, attendance is a standing item on the school's half-termly Curriculum Governor Committee meetings, when attendance figures and analysis are shared by the school's Attendance Lead.

3.2 The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- implementation of this policy at the school
- monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

3.3 The attendance officers

The school Attendance Lead (Deputy Headteacher) is responsible for:

- monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- monitoring attendance data across the school and at a group and individual pupil level
- reporting concerns about attendance to the Headteacher
- working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- holding meetings with parents/carers to discuss attendance issues
- supporting staff with recording and monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- advising the Headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The school Attendance Officer (office staff):

- supporting staff with recording the attendance of individual pupils
- monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to the attendance lead
- monitoring attendance data across the school and at a group and individual pupil level each week
- following weekly monitoring, reporting concerns and trends to the Attendance Lead
- sending letters and arranging meetings for the Attendance Lead to discuss attendance issues with parents/carers
- working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence

3.4 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for:

- recording attendance on a twice daily basis on Pupil Asset, using the correct codes
- where a pupil is absent, coding it as 'N' so that office staff know to follow-up
- passing any attendance-related information from parents/carers on to the attendance officer



3.5 School office staff

School office staff are responsible for:

- taking calls, listen to recorded messages and read pupil asset app messages and record absence information on Pupil Asset
- making follow-up phone calls for any pupils that are absent without reason
- making regular safe and well phone call checks, at least twice a week to maintain contact with families for safeguarding and welfare reasons

4. School procedures

4.1 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 9.20am.

The register for the second session will be taken at the start of the afternoon session at 1pm and will be kept open for 30 minutes until 1:30pm. If a pupil leaves before this register period has finished, the afternoon code will be changed to the appropriate code, e.g., unauthorised, medical.

4.2 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 5).



Parents/carers can ring and leave a message before the school office is open, use the Pupil Asset app, email the school office, phone to speak to a member of staff after 8.30 am or come to the school office 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/carers to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, a photo of the text message appointment or prescription, 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/Carer Contract with the Attendance Lead 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/carers will be notified of this.

4.3 Planned absence, e.g., 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. Parents may email or phone the school office to notify of medical

However, we encourage parents/carers 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/carers 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 5.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- before the register has closed, will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- after the register has closed, will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

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

4.5 Following up absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the school will:

- Follow up on their absence with their parent/carer to ascertain the reason, by phoning the parent/carer on the first day of absence. If contact is not made on the first day or the second day, office staff will notify the Headteacher and attendance lead who will identify further action, e.g., contacting other family members on pupil contact form, home visit.
- Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not.
- Identify the correct attendance code to use.



4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

- Attendance is included in written reports which are sent home to parents/carers at least once during the school year.
- Parents/carers have access to their child(ren)'s attendance data via the Pupil Asset app.
- Letters will be sent to parents/carers if their child's attendance becomes a concern and parents/carers may be invited to informal or formal meetings to discuss their child's attendance.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Granting approval for term-time absence

The Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to pupils during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the head teacher'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 (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail).
- 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. Days of a festival that are not specifically for religious observance cannot be authorised.
- 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 but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision elsewhere.

5.2 Reducing persistent absence

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 weekly. Absence is reviewed for all pupils as soon as their attendance dips below 97%. Parents/carers are informed by letter of concerns and may also be invited into school to discuss attendance with the Attendance Lead. For pupils whose attendance is a particular concern, monitoring is undertaken on a more frequent basis, including weekly. Pastoral meetings may also be requested by the school in order to explore reasons for absence more fully with parents/carers and explore ways in which school may be able to support the family/child.

5.3 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 eight or more consecutive sessions (4+ days) within an eight-week period where the pupil is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a Headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether to issue a penalty notice may consider:

- The 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 or withdraw the notice.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

Excellent attendance is vital to ensure the children have the best possible education, ultimately, enabling them to have greater choice later in life. Therefore, we take attendance very seriously and do all we can to support excellent attendance from all our children.

We expect, except in the case of genuine illness or exceptional circumstances, every pupil to attend school every day of the school year. Evidence nationally shows the negative impact of absence on pupil's academic attainment. School data also shows that pupils with lower attendance do not achieve as well as those with higher attendance.

Excellent attendance is promoted by staff by:

- believing attendance is every member of staff's business
- welcoming every pupil into school, personally, every morning
- ensuring a calm, safe, respectful environment across the school
- continually striving to provide an excellent curriculum, through which every pupil makes excellent progress
- committing to meet the SEMH and academic needs of all pupils
- building excellent relationships with parents/carers that both support and challenge
- monitoring and sharing attendance-related information between relevant staff

Excellent attendance is promoted with pupils by:

- ensuring Willingham is a safe, inclusive environment where every pupil is valued and respected by every member of staff
- welcoming each pupil into school each morning
- giving weekly EYFS/KS1 and KS2 attendance awards for the class with the highest attendance and punctuality in Celebration Assembly
- supporting individual pupils/siblings with individual needs or incentives e.g., ESA support, reward systems

Excellent attendance is promoted with parents/carers by:

- setting high attendance expectations with parents/carers



- making time to listen to any parent/carer concerns or difficulties and supporting or acting on the information where appropriate
- SMT being visible and accessible e.g., being at the school gate at the beginning/end of day
- daily safeguarding/wellbeing absence checks and quickly acting on decreasing attendance (further detail in section 4)
- holding Pastoral and/or Parent Contract meetings to ensure school is supporting the family/pupil where possible, alongside clear target setting for improved attendance.
- supporting and working with parents/carers, e.g., use of school wraparound provision, increased school/home communication with class teacher, Emotional Support Assistant 1-1 work with pupil.

7. Attendance monitoring

The attendance officer monitors pupil absence on a weekly basis and discusses the data and analysis each week with the Attendance Lead. The school meets with the Education Welfare Officer at least once a year to consider attendance across the school and for individual pupils. Up-to-date advice and guidance are provided by termly Local Authority briefings, which are attended by both the Attendance Lead and Officer.

Parents/carers are expected to message on the Pupil Asset app, call or email the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2). Parents/carers 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 parents/carers do not call each day of the illness, the school's office staff will contact the parent/carer at least every other day for the purpose of checking safety and wellbeing.

If the school knows of no reason why a pupil is absent, and the pupil'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 on that day. If no contact can be made, the school will try again. If still no contact is made, other contacts on the data collection sheet provided by parents/carers will be contacted. If the school can still not make contact or contact made is not satisfactory, the office staff will report this to the Headteacher and Attendance Lead, in order to seek other methods to check the safety and wellbeing of the pupil.

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 pupil is stored on Pupil Asset. This is inputted by teachers during twice daily registers and by office staff, giving further detail, if a pupil is absent.

Attendance data is analysed using the Pupil Asset system to track attendance of individuals, groups (e.g., pupil premium, disadvantaged, SEN, prior low attenders) and the school as a whole. The analysis is undertaken weekly by the Attendance Officer and Attendance Lead.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Attendance Lead. At every review, the policy will be shared with, and approved by, the Curriculum Committee of the governing board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to the following policies: Safeguarding and Child Protection, SEN, Self-Regulation and Behaviour, PSHE and Accessibility Plan.

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

