

# THE WILLOWS PRIMARY SCHOOL



## ATTENDANCE POLICY

|                |                                      |
|----------------|--------------------------------------|
| Author:        | HEADTEACHER                          |
| Date:          | Nov 24                               |
| Review Date:   | Nov 25                               |
| Date approved: |                                      |
| Signed :       | The Full Governing Board/Headteacher |

## Improving attendance is everyone's business.

Good attendance begins with school being somewhere pupils want to be and therefore the foundation of securing good attendance at The Willows is that our school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils are keen and ready to learn.

At all stages of improving attendance, we will work in partnership with pupils and parents collaboratively to remove any barriers to attendance and build strong and trusting relationships so that we can work together to put the right support in place.

Securing good attendance and punctuality are priorities for all those associated with the school including pupils, parents/carers, teachers and governors.

### The Law

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives this education. Therefore, parents have an additional legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly.

This means that children must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

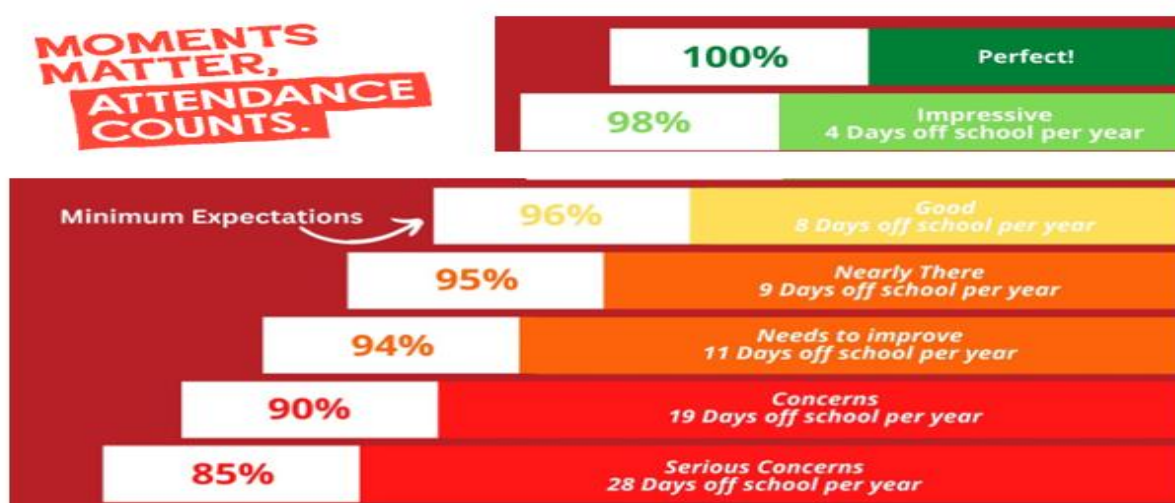
Regular and consistent attendance is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing and wider life chances. The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of primary school have higher rates of attendance compared to those with the lowest attainment.

Regular attendance is also an important protective factor and gives children the best opportunity to receive the full range of support that the school can offer – academic, pastoral and emotional support.

### Why is Attendance Important?

All pupils must attend school regularly **and** arrive on time as all absences affect a child's schooling. Children who are persistently absent from school miss out on key aspects of learning and have to play catch-up, which can cause them to fall behind.

Research has shown that regular attendance and good punctuality are crucial factors in students achieving their full potential at school. See diagram below, which explains links between attainment and attendance.



We wish to work in partnership with parents/carers and seek their full support in ensuring that children attend school every day and on time. The school monitors attendance and will ensure that any problems which affect full attendance are acted on quickly. Every pupil is placed in one of the following groups during the half-termly attendance review completed by the Headteacher and discussed with the leadership team and the pastoral team.

**Group 1: Good Attendance** - The child attends for **96% - 100%** of the time. We aim for between 98% - 100% although we accept this is not always possible through genuine illness

**96% means that a child is absent for one and a half weeks of the academic year.**

**Group 2: Concern** - The child attends for **90% - 95.9%** of the time.

**90% means that a child is absent for three and a half weeks of the academic year.**

**Group 3: Significant risk of underachievement** - The child attends for **85% - 89.99%** of the time.

**85% means that a child is absent for five weeks of the academic year.**

**Group 4: Severe risk of underachievement** - The child attends for less than 85% of the time.

**Less than 85% means that a child is absent for more than five weeks of the academic year.**

**It is important that parents/carers monitor single day absences, as these days can soon add up to weeks.**

We will, of course, continue to work positively and collaboratively with parents to support students who have low attendance. Please speak to your child's class teacher if your child is worried about attending school.

Please reassure your child that anxiety is a normal emotion that everyone experiences from time to time. Research has shown that the cycle of anxiety has to be broken otherwise the initial problem becomes bigger in a child's mind and this makes it even harder to attend school i.e. anxiety leads to more anxiety if not tackled head on. It is therefore important that you reach out to us as soon as your child becomes reluctant to attend so we can all work together to help resolve any fears and issues.

There are important steps that all parents can take to help support good attendance:

- Ensure your child comes to school every day, on time, equipped and "ready to learn". Gates close at 8.45 and children should be in class by this time.
- Talk to your child about the impact of lateness on their school day and how it could affect them later in life.
- Do not allow your child to stay off because they are feeling tired or because of an issue which makes the journey a little more difficult than usual. Resilience is an important trait for children to develop and that will benefit them in later life.
- Make sure you respond to school letters, telephone calls, emails and texts regarding attendance and punctuality.
- Communicate with school staff early and regularly when you have any concerns that may impact your child's attendance.
- Try to ensure that medical appointments are made outside of school time. Inform the school in a timely manner of any medical appointments, providing evidence if required.
- Book holidays during the school holidays.

**Absence from school without a good reason may be an offence in law and may result in prosecution.**

## **Promoting Good Attendance**

The school celebrates individual attendance each term:

- GOLD award for 100% attendance
- SILVER award for 99% attendance
- BRONZE award for 98% attendance

In addition, the school encourages good attendance by:

- clear communication with parents/carers and pupils about the importance of regular, prompt attendance
- reporting attendance to parents/carers at parents' evenings
- reporting to parents/carers on their child's attendance in the annual school report.

## **Working Together to improve school attendance**

To improve the overall attendance of pupils at school, the school will provide parents/carers and pupils with support, advice and clear guidance about attendance and punctuality.

### **Expect**

We aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents. At The Willows, we have built a culture where all children can and want to be in school and are ready to learn. Attendance improvement is prioritised by all who work across the school.

### **Monitor**

We rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them quickly before they become routine and entrenched. Ongoing poor attendance affects children's learning and the school wants to minimise the amount of learning lost for all children.

### **Listen and understand**

When a pattern is spotted, the school discusses this with pupils and parents to identify and understand reasons for absence as well as any barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

### **Facilitate support**

School staff help pupils and parents to access the support they need to resolve reasons for absence and overcome the barriers to attendance that are happening outside of school. This might include an early help or a whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

### **Formalise support**

Where absence persists and attendance is still an issue and support is not working or not being engaged with, we will explain the consequences clearly and enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance contract or education supervision order. At this stage the school will make contact with the Education Welfare Service to make a referral.

### **Enforce**

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, the school will enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

## **Types of Absence**

Every half-day absence from school will be classified by the school (not by the parents/carers), as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, and is in fact a legal requirement.

Please note routine GP and dental appointments should be made outside of school hours and schools have had clear directive from the DfE not to provide work for students who are absent for routine illness.

If your child is ill, please contact us one of the following ways preferably before the start of the school day:

- [office@willows.w-berks.sch.uk](mailto:office@willows.w-berks.sch.uk) OR 01635 42155

Please ensure messages clearly provide:

- The child's full name and year group
- A specific reason on the first day of absence and every subsequent day/s if the illness/absence continues. We cannot accept general reasons such as poorly, ill or unwell.

In the event of an absence lasting more than five days, we will require evidence from your GP practice in order to authorise the absence. You will be asked to provide evidence of reasons for absence if your child already has low attendance i.e. below 90%.

**Authorised absences** are mornings or afternoons away from school for unavoidable causes like illness, religious observance and medical/dental appointments which cannot be arranged outside school time or emergencies.

### **Informing the school about absence due to medical appointments**

We advise parents/carers to book routine appointments outside of school hours or during school holidays where possible. If you do need to make an appointment during the school day we ask for them to take place first thing in the morning or towards the end of the day. **Children are expected to be in school for at least part of the day if they are attending a medical appointment**, unless the appointment is a considerable distance from school.

**Unauthorised absences** are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which the school has not given its permission in advance. This type of absence can lead to sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

Examples of unauthorised absence include:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. shopping, looking after other children, birthdays, day trips
- absences which are not properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get an attendance mark
- holidays during term time.

Students of school age must, by law, attend school regularly. Holidays should not be taken during school time. Absence from school during term time is disruptive both to your child's education and to the school. There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday. **ALL holiday absence is marked as unauthorised.**

There is a National Framework for Penalty Notice Fines being issued for unauthorised absences recorded by schools

| <b>National Threshold</b>   |
|---|
| A single consistent national threshold for when a Penalty Notice must be considered by <b>ALL</b> schools in England, this is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period</li><li>• These sessions do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence</li><li>• <b>For example:</b> a 5-day unauthorised leave of absence would meet the national threshold</li><li>• The 10-school week period can span different terms or school years</li></ul> |

| Who may be fined?  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Penalty Notice Fines are issued to each parent who allows their child to be absent without authorisation from school</li> <li><b>For example:</b> 3 siblings absent for unauthorised leave during term-time would result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines</li> </ul> |

| First Offence  |
|--|
| <p>The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for unauthorised absence, the fine amount will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>£160 per parent, per child</b> - payable within 28 days</li> <li><b>If paid within 21 days, the fine will decrease to £80 per parent, per child</b></li> </ul> |

| Second Offence (within 3 years)   |
|---|
| <p>The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for unauthorised absence, a reduced rate is not available. The amount therefore will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>£160 per parent, per child</b> – payable within 28 days</li> </ul> |

| Third Offence and Any Further Offences (within 3 years)   |
|---|
| <p>The third time an offence is committed, a Penalty Notice <b>WILL NOT</b> be issued, and the case will be presented straight to the Magistrate's Court.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prosecution can result in criminal records and <b>finest of up to £2,500</b></li> <li>Cases found guilty in a Magistrates Court can show on the parent's future DBS certificate (Disclosure and Barring Service) due to a <b>'failure to safeguard a child's education'</b></li> </ul> |

The school want to ensure that parents understand the updated FPN system illustrated in their poster below. This is sent out regularly to parents so that everyone is aware that this is something the school and LA must enforce.

# EVERY SCHOOL DAY MATTERS



## Penalty Notice Fines for absence from school are changing

From 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024 Penalty Notice fines increase to £160 for each parent, for each child.







You can be fined if your child has a total of 5 days of unauthorised absences in 10 school weeks, for things like:

- being late after the register has closed
- truancy
- taking a holiday without permission from the school
- or if a headteacher isn't satisfied for the reason for missing school

Over a rolling 3-year period the sanctions are:

- 1st offence – £160 reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days
- 2nd offence – £160
- 3rd offence – Court hearing and up to £2,500 fine, or up to 3 months in prison and a criminal record



For more information please contact:  
EWSS@westberks.gov.uk

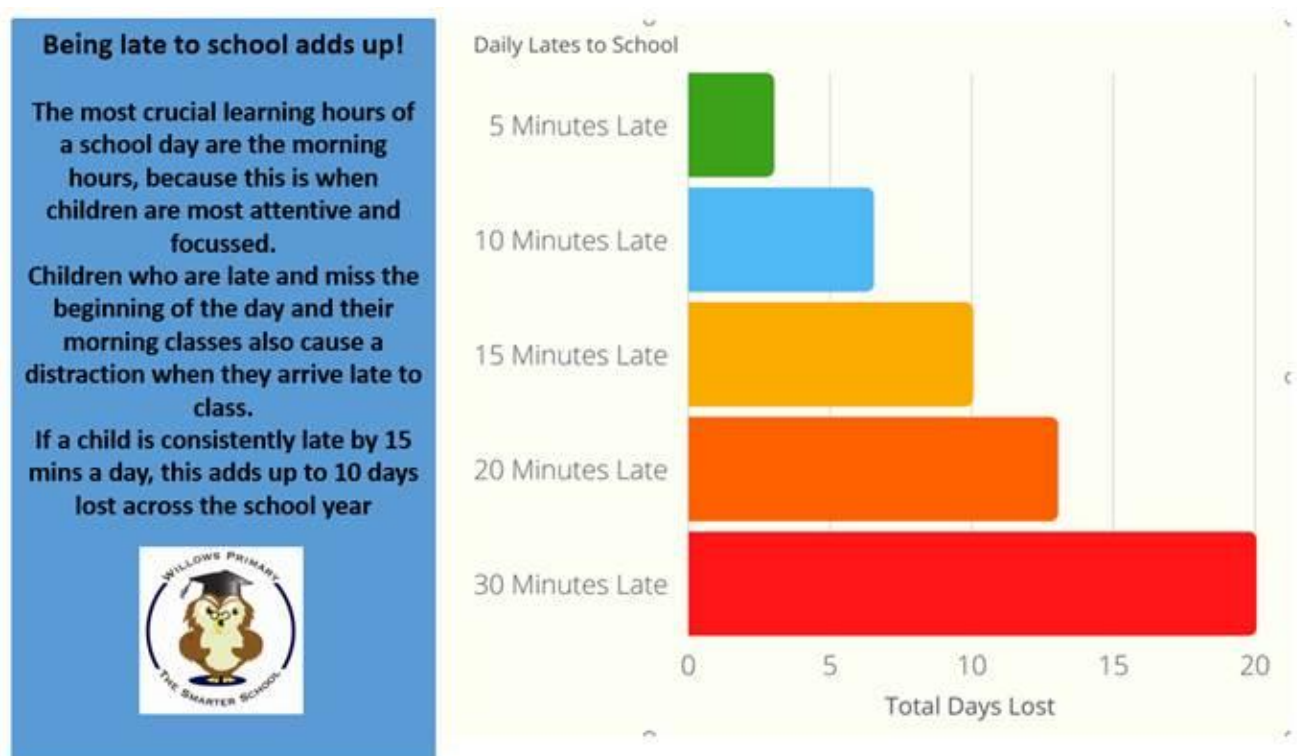
## Late arrival at school

Lateness is not acceptable. The school day starts at **8:45am**. The school expects all children to be in the classroom before this time. The school gates are closed at **8:45am** and the attendance registers are closed at **9:00am**.

If your child arrives after 9:00am, they will receive an unauthorised absence.

If your child arrives late to school, they will miss out on important information. The teacher has to then take time from the rest of the class to settle them in. They may also feel self-conscious about entering the classroom late and will miss important social interaction with friends before school.

Frequent lateness adds up to a considerable amount of learning lost, and this disadvantages children and affects their overall progress. Teaching children the importance of punctuality will help them to learn independence and the importance of good time keeping for their future work and responsibilities.



**If your child has a persistent late record,** you will be asked to meet with the Headteacher to resolve the problem. You can approach the school at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

If no contact is received regarding an absence, it is recorded as unauthorised. If we have not received a message by 10.00am, absences will be investigated via a text message or telephone call. If no reason is given the absence will be marked as unauthorised.

If a child is persistently absent for medical reasons and their attendance falls below 90%, the school will ask to see medical evidence before authorising any absence from school. If medical evidence cannot be provided, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.