

THE WILLOWS PRIMARY SCHOOL



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Author:	HEADTEACHER
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Signed :	The Full Governing Board/Headteacher

THE WILLOWS PRIMARY SCHOOL – ATTENDANCE POLICY

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

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. The school will also develop positive and consistent communication between home and school about attendance and punctuality.

1. Good Attendance at School is Important

Regular, punctual attendance at school is important. All pupils must receive a full-time education. Uninterrupted attendance at school ensures children receive the education they need to make progress and realise their potential.

All pupils must attend school regularly **and** arrive on time.

All absences affect a child's schooling. Persistent absence, in particular, will seriously affect their learning. A pupil's late arrival disrupts teaching and unfairly affects the learning of others in the same class. Children who are persistently absent from school miss out on whole modules of learning and have to play catch-up, which can cause them unnecessary stress.

Parents/carers are responsible for making sure their children attend school, get to school on time and are properly prepared for the day.

The school monitors attendance and will ensure that any problems which may affect full attendance are acted on quickly.

The school will challenge the attitude of those pupils and parents/carers who give low priority to attendance and punctuality. Half a day's absence a week equals 90% attendance.

2. Parents'/Carers' Responsibilities

Ensuring your child's regular, punctual attendance at school is your responsibility as a parent/carer.

You should:

- seek permission from the school for any absence
- endeavour to keep doctor's, dentist's and hospital appointments, and holidays, out of school hours
- inform a member of staff of any matters that may affect your child's attendance.

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

3. Promoting Good Attendance

Making sure children attend school regularly and punctually is everybody's responsibility – parents/carers, pupils and members of school staff.

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
- giving parents details on attendance in school newsletters
- discussing attendance with parents/carers at consultation evenings, if attendance is below 95%
- reporting to parents/carers on their child's attendance in the annual school report.

4. The School's Responsibilities

Class teachers have a legal duty to call and maintain an accurate attendance register. They are responsible for marking their register twice a day at the start of each session – morning and afternoon.

Non-attendance is treated seriously. Before deciding what intervention might be necessary, the school will consider all factors affecting attendance.

Where a pattern of non-attendance is emerging, the parent/carer will be called into school to work with staff to help resolve any difficulties.

Where an absence or pattern of absence continues without explanation or improvement, the school may refer the matter to the West Berkshire Education Welfare Service.

The Headteacher is overall responsible for attendance matters, supported by the school's nominated Pastoral Support Worker and the class teachers. The Local Authority's Education Welfare Service will liaise with the school regarding absences following contact with a parent/carer.

5. Lateness

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 **9:15am**.

If your child arrives after 9:15am, they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as attendance. It will mean they have an unauthorised absence.

If a child misses the start of the day, they may miss important school work, and vital information and news for the day. Pupils arriving late also disrupt lessons and it can be embarrassing for the child.

Good time-keeping is a vital life skill which helps children as they progress through their school life and into the wider world.

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.

6. 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.

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

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
- absences which are not properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get an attendance mark
- shopping, looking after other children, birthdays, day trips
- holidays during term time which have not been agreed in advance with the school.

7. What to do if Your Child is Absent from School

If your child is absent, you must contact the school on 01635 42155 on the first day of absence **before 9:00am**, informing us of the reason for absence.

Calls from parents/carers regarding absence are logged. After this time registers are updated accordingly.

Alternatively, you can call into school in person and report to reception.

If your child is absent and we have not heard from you, the school will contact you, to ascertain the reason for absence.

8. Persistent Absence

If absences persist, the school will invite you in to discuss the situation.

If attendance does not improve, the school will refer the matter to the West Berkshire Education Welfare Service.

Any absences due to illness are unlikely to be authorised without evidence that medical advice has been sought.

If a child is absent for illness reasons for more than three days or if a period of sickness absence directly follows a period of unauthorised holiday absence, the school will ask to see evidence of the child's attendance at the doctors (e.g. sight of a GP appointment card or a prescription) before the absence can be counted as authorised.

If a child is persistently absent for medical reasons and their attendance falls below 91%, the school may ask to see evidence of the child's attendance at the doctors (e.g. a sight of a GP appointment card or a prescription) before the absence can be counted as authorised.

If a child's attendance is continuously below the 90% threshold, parents/carers will be liable for a Fixed Penalty Notice if their child has 20 or more unauthorised absences (equivalent to 10 days) within a 10-school-week period. Unauthorised absence includes arrival at school after the registers have closed.

9. Requests for Authorised Absence during Term Time

Because of the disruption caused to children's learning, periods of absence during term time are strongly discouraged.

The school will authorise absence during term time ***only in exceptional circumstances and only for pupils whose attendance in the previous 12 months is above 95%.***

Exceptional circumstances include:

- illness or medical appointments which cannot be made outside school hours
- religious observance
- compassionate/bereavement leave to attend the funeral of a close relative
- school visits or exams
- sporting events which have a significant contribution to the child's life.

If you make an application for authorised absence during term time, the Headteacher will give consideration to:

- the nature of the parent's wishes
- the timing of the proposed absence
- the child's attendance pattern in the present and previous academic years
- the child's current attendance percentage
- the child's progress.

All applications for authorised absence during term time must be made at least one month in advance. Parents/carers should use an absence request form, which can be obtained from the school office.

The school's Governing Board has given the Headteacher full authority to grant or deny a request based upon previous attendance and potential impact on the child's education.

The school will not authorise absence from school during term time if the following circumstances apply:

- When a pupil is just starting at the school. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible.
- Immediately before or during statutory assessment periods (SATS) for year 1, 2 and 6 pupils.
- When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence.
- When a pupil's attendance rate is already below 95% or will fall to or below that level as a result of taking the period of absence being requested.

Any period of leave taken without authorisation from the school, or in excess of it, will be classed as unauthorised and will be subject to sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

Please also see Note 10 below entitled "The Legal Small Print about Time Off School during Term Time".

10. The Legal Small Print about Time Off School during Term Time

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended by the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 – effective from 1 September 2013 – make clear that Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Government research shows that absence in term time has a negative effect on children's progress and achievement. Missing school seriously affects children's longer-term life opportunities. Parents should, therefore, avoid absenting their child from school for planned leave of absence. This practice is actively discouraged by the school.

In the event that such absence is taken and the Head Teacher has not authorised it, this will be marked in the register as an "unauthorised planned leave of absence". Such unauthorised absence may result in a Fixed Penalty fine being issued, which if not paid may result in prosecution for failing to ensure a child's attendance at school.

Penalty Notices come under the Education Act 1996, as amended by Section 23 of the Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003.

A Penalty Notice can be given:

- when a pupil has missed 20 half-day sessions from school within a 10-school-week period and these absences are unauthorised. Late arrival at school after the time registers have closed counts as an unauthorised absence and will be marked as a "U" against the pupil's name in the register; or
- when a pupil has missed 10 or more half-day sessions from school in a 10-school-week period (i.e. 5 school days) and these absences are unauthorised. This applies where the parent has taken the child out of school for a period of absence (e.g. holiday), but this has not been authorised by the Headteacher. The unauthorised sessions of absence may or may not be consecutive.

Penalty Notices are issued per parent or carer per pupil. Failure to pay a Penalty Notice will result in each parent or carer being summonsed to appear in Court for an offence under Section 444 (1) Education Act 1996 for failing to ensure regular school attendance and could be subject to a fine from £1,000 up to £2,500 (fines are payable to the LA, not the school) This conviction also carries a criminal record.

West Berkshire has issued a Code of Practice on Penalty Notices with further "Information for Parents on Penalty Notices" which can be downloaded from: www.westberks.gov.uk