THE WILLOWS PRIMARY SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

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Signed :	Governing Board/Headteacher

Improving attendance is everyone's business.

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

We will work with children and parents to remove any barriers to attendance. Securing good attendance and punctuality are priorities for all those associated with the school.

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.

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.

Why is Attendance Important?

All pupils must attend school regularly **and** arrive on time as all absences affect a child's learning and education. 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.

The school celebrates individual attendance each term:

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

The school monitors attendance and will ensure that any problems which affect full attendance are acted on quickly. Half-termly attendance reviews are completed by the Headteacher – parents are contacted if there are any concerns or attendance has fallen below an acceptable level. Attendance is also reported to parents at termly parents' evenings and as part of the end of year school report.

- **Excellent attendance – 98% - 100%**
- **Good Attendance - 96% - 97.99%**
- **Attendance concerns - 90% - 95.9% This means a total of three and a half weeks missed across the year.**
- **Persistent and significant attendance concerns - 85% - 89.99%. This means a total of five weeks missed across the year.**
- **Severe attendance concerns - less than 85%. This means more than five weeks missed across the year.**

It is important that parents/carers monitor single day absences, as these days can soon add up to weeks. Absence from school without a good reason may be an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

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 as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve issues 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.

When a pattern is spotted, the school requests a meeting with parents to identify and understand reasons for absence as well as any barriers to attendance.

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.

Formalise support
Where absence persists and attendance is still an issue and support is not working or not being engaged with, we will request another meeting to formalise support through an attendance contract or education supervision order. At this stage the school will refer the child to the Education Welfare Service for further support and action.

Enforce
Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or parents and children are not engaging, 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.

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.

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. It is a legal requirement.

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 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.

If we have not received a message by 9.15am, absences will be investigated via a text message or telephone call. If no reason is given the absence will be marked as unauthorised.

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.

Absence due to illness/medical appointments

Please note routine GP and dental appointments should be made outside of school hours wherever 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.

The school has the right to request medical evidence in order to authorise illness/medical absence.

If your child has poor attendance (below 90%) – medical evidence will be requested to authorise absences. If medical evidence is not provided, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

If there are patterns to your child's absence from school – medical evidence will be requested to authorise absences. If medical evidence is not provided, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Any illness/medical absence that directly precedes or follows a period of holiday absence, will only be authorised if medical evidence is provided. This is to ensure that illness is not being falsified to avoid a penalty notice being issued for the holiday absence.

If parents are found to have falsified illness/medical appointments in order to go on holiday without requesting this absence or to avoid a penalty notice fine - medical evidence will be requested to authorise this and future absences. If medical evidence is not provided, the absences will be recorded as unauthorised.

In the event of an absence lasting for five or more days, we will require medical evidence in order to authorise the absence. A child who is ill for this length of time should be seen by a medical practitioner.

Any absence for a week or more is a cause for concern. In these circumstances, we have a duty of care to ensure that your child is safe. We may ask you to bring your child to school so that we can complete a safeguarding check. If this is not possible, we may complete a home visit.

Please speak to your child's class teacher if your child is worried about attending school. 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.

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
- absences without medical evidence
- children who arrive at school too late to get an attendance mark
- all holidays during term time
- absence due to traffic issues
- children being absent because parents cannot bring them to school

When we do not receive any reason or explanation for a child's absence, it is automatically recorded as unauthorised.

Children of statutory school age must, by law, attend school regularly. Holidays should not be taken during school time. 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

National Threshold
A single consistent national threshold for when a Penalty Notice must be considered by **ALL** schools in England, this is: • 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period • These sessions do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence • **For example:** a 5-day unauthorised leave of absence would meet the national threshold • The 10-school week period can span different terms or school years

Who may be fined?
• Penalty Notice Fines are issued to each parent who allows their child to be absent without authorisation from school • **For example:** 3 siblings absent for unauthorised leave during term-time would result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines

First Offence
The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for unauthorised absence, the fine amount will be: • **£160 per parent, per child** - payable within 28 days • **If paid within 21 days, the fine will decrease to £80 per parent, per child**

Second Offence (within 3 years)
The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for unauthorised absence, a reduced rate is not available. The amount therefore will be: • **£160 per parent, per child** – payable within 28 days

Third Offence and Any Further Offences (within 3 years)

The third time an offence is committed, a Penalty Notice **WILL NOT** be issued, and the case will be presented straight to the Magistrate's Court.

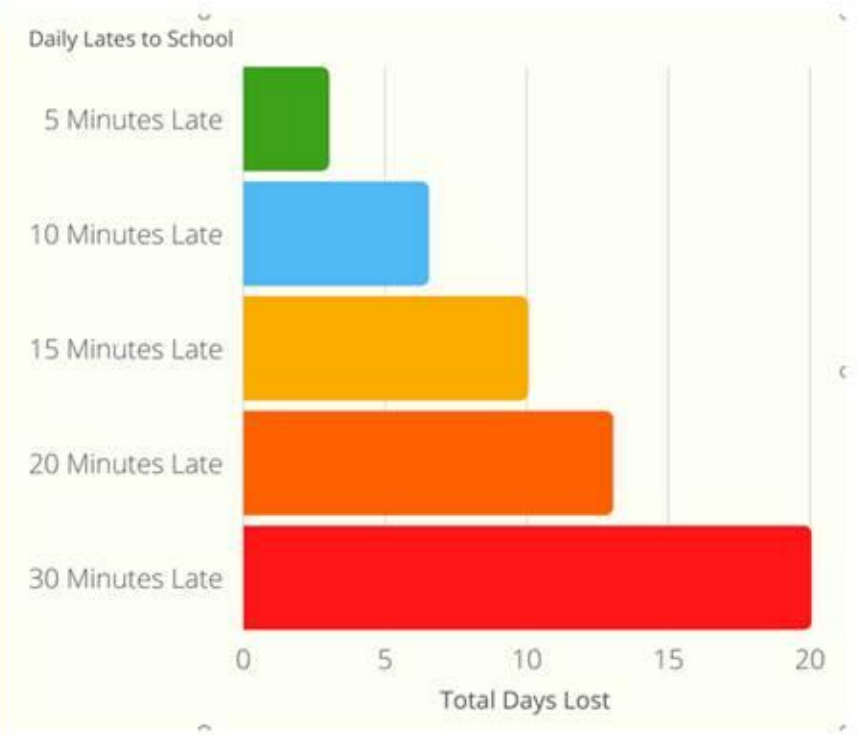
- Prosecution can result in criminal records and **fines of up to £2,500**
- Cases found guilty in a Magistrates Court can show on the parent's future DBS certificate (Disclosure and Barring Service) due to a **'failure to safeguard a child's education'**

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.

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.