

Willow School Policy



Attendance Policy

Date : July 2024

Review Date: July 2026

Aims

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

- Promoting excellent 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
- Understanding how regular attendance is key to ensuring high achievement as there is a clear link between regular attendance and educational progress
- Supporting 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.

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 3

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

School Procedures

Attendance register

By law, all schools are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register. The attendance register will be taken at 9:00am, the start of each school day and at 1:00pm at the start of the afternoon session. It will mark whether each pupil is:

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

Categorisation of Absence

Any pupil who is on roll but not present in the school must be recorded within one of these categories.

Unauthorised Absence

This is for those pupils where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason.

This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off School unnecessarily
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Family holidays/days out/events during Term time
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Excessive illness without medical evidence
- Any absence which has not been explained by the parent by 10.00 am

Authorised Absence

This is for those pupils who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996.

Approved Educational Activity

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the School.

Note: Pupils recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes.

This would include:

- Field trips and educational visits
- Sporting activities
- Approved education off site
- Most types of dual registration

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, ideally before the start of the school day. Parents to notify the school and leave a message on the dedicated answer machine stating the reason for absence by 9:30am. Also, include if intending to seek medical advice from the Doctor/Hospital. This must be done on every day of the pupil's absence unless otherwise agreed by the school.

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, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. 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

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 can access a 'Pupil request for absence form' from the school 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 the authorised and authorised section.

Lateness and Punctuality

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed (before 9:30am) will be marked as 'Late' (Code L). A pupil who arrives after the register has closed (after 9:30am) will be marked as 'Late after register closed' (Code U – Unauthorised Absence)

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.

The school will telephone the parent after 09:30 am to request a reason for absence. School will note any reason given for absence. The school reserves the right to authorise the absence in exceptional circumstances; the decision to use "exceptional circumstances" will rest solely with the Headteacher. If the School is unable to make contact then, wherever possible, a message will be left. The school will also contact all of the 'Emergency Contacts' that the parents provided on their child's admission form.

If no contact can be made the school may complete a welfare check to the family home and may also seek further advice from other professional services.

Reporting to Parents

The school will provide parents with termly attendance data for their child and an annual summary with their End of Year annual report. On this letter it will include a guide to the traffic light percentage system that we follow, as well as specific data about the child's attendance so far this academic year.

Frequent Absence

The school understands that at some point most children will be off school due to illness. When looking at attendance patterns the school needs to ascertain if absenteeism is disguising other difficulties including a reluctance to attend school. It is in the best interest for the child, for home and school to work in partnership, in order to quickly and effectively resolve any issues leading to non-attendance.

The school monitors attendance on a daily basis as if a child's attendance falls below 90% it is classed as Persistent Absence and we will (unless there are exceptional circumstances) ask parents to attend an Attendance Panel Meeting in school.

This meeting gives an opportunity for school and home to discuss the reasons for the poor attendance and to look at strategies to help overcome this. It is important for school and home to work together to address the barriers and this meeting provides clear direction and next steps.

Following this meeting the child's attendance will be monitored over the next 4 weeks and a further Attendance Panel Meeting will take place to review the progress or next steps. Once the attendance has risen to a satisfactory level these meetings then cease.

If attendance remains a concern, opportunities will be given to support the family through the Early Help Assessment Process. Parents need to be mindful of the section regarding Legal Sanctions that can be enforced.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Granting approval for term-time absence

The Headteacher may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion.

Valid reasons for authorised absence include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (that are not routine)
- 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
- 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
- Flexi-schooling requests – this is again at the discretion of the Headteacher and will only be approved if it is deemed to be in the best interests of the child.
- As with all children, the decision on whether to authorise term-time holidays for the children of employees where holiday time is restricted (E.g. Services Personnel) sits solely with the head teacher. Additional evidence may be required when requesting absence during term-time and each case will be considered individually.

Warning Letters

All parents with Parental Responsibility will now be issued with a warning letter at the start of each academic year. As all holiday (unless deemed to be 'exceptional circumstances') will be unauthorised this removes the need for individual warning letters to be sent at each holiday request.

Legal Sanctions

Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. This can be for:

- Holiday has been taken during term time (over 4½ days over a six week period)
- Where a child is absent from school due to unauthorised absence of 15% or above over a six week period.

This will include lateness after the close of registration when code U is used.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 (per parent, per child) within 21 days or £120 (per parent, per child) 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.

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/s.

Strategies for Promoting Attendance

Raising the profile of attendance

We continuously aim to raise the profile of attendance with parents and the wider community through the use of home-school agreements, parents' evening, school newsletters and termly attendance letters.

When welcoming and inducting new parents we raise the importance of punctuality and attendance and introduce them to their responsibilities.

Involve parents

We communicate with parents about positive achievements through weekly letters and regular meetings with parents. We also ensure parents are able to discuss their concerns and difficulties with managing their child's attendance with staff.

Positively reintegrating absentees

When a pupil has been late or absent it is important to positively welcome them into the class on their return. By offering extended support and ensuring absent pupils have work adapted to help them catch up will help minimise problems on their return to school.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Board

The governing board 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.

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.

Alongside this, the headteacher:

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the headteacher
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Where possible will lead Attendance Panel Meetings
- Advises the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

Class teachers

- Recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.
- Monitoring a child's attendance and being aware of any patterns and/or concerns.
- Attending Attendance Panel meetings.

Office Staff

- Office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system.
- Monitor patterns or concerns in attendance and report their concerns to the Headteacher.
- Prepare six termly Attendance reports for Governors.

Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Attendance Lead. At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing board.

Links with Other Policies

This policy is linked to our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Appendix 1: Attendance Codes

Code	Reason	DfE Description / Explanation
/	Present (AM)	<i>Present for school morning session</i>
\	Present (PM)	<i>Present for school afternoon session</i>
V	Educational Visit	<i>Attending an educational visit or trip</i>
L	Late (before registers closes)	<i>Late arrival before the register closed (After 9am but before 9:30am)</i>
U	Late (after register closes)	<i>Late arrival after register closes (After 9:30am)</i>
C	Other circumstances	<i>Leave absence for exception circumstance (Authorised)</i>
E	Suspended or excluded without alternative provision	<i>Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision</i>
G	Family holiday (Not agreed)	<i>Unauthorised absence as pupil on a family holiday, not agreed, or is taking days more than an agreed family holiday</i>
I	Illness	<i>Illness (Not medical or dental appointment)</i>
M	Medical or dental appointment	<i>Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment</i>
N	No reason yet provided	<i>Reason absence not yet established</i>
O	Other or unknown circumstances	<i>Absence in other or unknown circumstances (Unauthorised)</i>
Y1	Unable to attend	<i>Transport not available</i>
Y2	Unable to attend	<i>Widespread travel emergency</i>
Y4	Unable to attend	<i>Unavoidable school closure</i>
Y6	Unable to attend	<i>Secretary of State has issued an alert about the incidence or transmission of a specific illness or infection</i>

