



Willenhall Community Primary School

Guidance on Attendance

Owner:	Family Support Team	Published date:	December 2021
Approved by Headteacher:	Lorraine Knowles	Date:	September 2021
Approved by Chair of Governors:		Date:	
Date to be reviewed:	September 2024		

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1. Introduction

At Willenhall Community we recognise that regular attendance by pupils is an important factor in pupils progress. We also consider that the prevention of unauthorised absence forms an integral part of our policy to promote good behaviour and discipline.

2. Aims

- To encourage and secure attendance and to improve the school attendance figures to over 96%
- To reduce the incidence of unauthorised absence.
- To reward good/significantly improved attendance.
- To improve the monitoring of attendance at a school and individual pupil level.

3. Rationale

The school's priority is to improve attendance, we do this by:-

- The continuous development of our computerised attendance systems.
- Close working relationships with the Early Help Team
- 'Early Bird' first day of absence call.
- Raising the profile of attendance across the whole school.
- Encouragement of parents/carers to be involved.
- Home visits where appropriate
- Closer working relationship with parents to encourage good attendance

The school has targets to improve attendance and all children have an important part to play in meeting these targets.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is 96% and we will keep parents informed of their child's attendance.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

4. Understanding types of absence:

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason such as illness which the symptoms must be described, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable. Unauthorised absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time will not be authorised.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

5. Lateness

The registers will remain open until 9.00 am for KS1 and KS2 and where patterns of lateness begin to emerge the school will seek to involve the Local Authority Attendance Officer at an early stage.

6. Persistent Absenteeism (PA):

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational progress and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects progress and attainment.

All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Local Authority Attendance Officer.

The Head teacher and SAW team will liaise with the Local Authority Attendance Team or the Early Help Team and address issues of attendance that are acting as a barrier to a child's learning.

When staff become concerned about a pupil's attendance they will be required to discuss this with the Head teacher or a member of the SAW team who will then draw a course of action and where needed liaise with the appropriate individuals. This action may involve home visits.

The Early Help Team may also provide the following support:

- Intensive support for individual pupils.
- Group work with pupils identified as vulnerable.
- Work with parents, supporting those in difficulties over their child's non-attendance or over a broader range of problems.
- Co-ordination of inter-agency meetings possibly involving behaviour support services, social services, child and mental health services etc.
- Support strategies for improving attendance and punctuality eg 'Early Bird' schemes.

The Head Teacher and SAW team meet every week to discuss any attendance issues including Nursery and Reception.

7. Involvement of Parents:

We believe that the involvement of parents is one of the key issues in addressing issues surrounding improving attendance. We will ensure that parents are made aware of their responsibilities with regard to attendance as per the Government guidelines.

We will also seek to remind parents of the need to inform the school of the reason for the child's absence as soon as possible. Reasons must be explained fully. Words like 'illness', 'sick', or 'poorly' will NOT be authorised.

We consider that in the case of absence it is a reasonable expectation that the reasons for absence are communicated preferably on the first day by either:

- Telephoning the school –speak or leave a message
- Sending a letter with a sibling/friend.
- Sending a text message to the school mobile or comms system

In cases where unacceptable reasons are given i.e. parents have condoned the absence for example to take a child shopping, we will seek to discuss these matters with the parents and if serious concerns do arrive we will enlist the support of the Local Authority Attendance Officer.

8. DfE Guidance Term-time Holiday

Previously the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 allowed

head teachers to grant leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday during term time in “special circumstances” of up to ten school days leave per year. Head teachers can also grant extended leave for more than ten school days in exceptional circumstances.

However amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that **head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances**. Head teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

It is for head teachers to determine if the requests for leave of absence are reasonable. Each request should be judged on a case by case basis, and we expect that head teachers will use their discretion sparingly.

Where family holidays or leave of absence are taken without the permission of the school, parents can be given a Penalty Notice for periods of unauthorised holidays.

9. Home-School Agreement

The school’s Home School Agreement seeks the support of parents to try and ensure that the children attend school every day and arrive on time. The school agrees to contact parents if any problems arise with a child’s attendance or punctuality.

10. Raising the Profile of School Attendance

In order to raise the profile of school attendance, we have developed a school attendance action plan. Please refer to this for our school objectives and rewards.

The school will use the newsletter and twitter to highlight systems designed to encourage attendance.

11. In conclusion

We will place a high priority on punctuality and regular attendance and seek to encourage it at every opportunity.