

Willows Academy Attendance Policy

Introduction

We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to strive for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Why Regular Attendance is so important?

Learning

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring children's regular attendance at school is the legal responsibility of parents/carers and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Safeguarding

A child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

Under section 444 of the Education Act 1996 a parent commits an offence if they fail to ensure their child's regular attendance at school where the child is registered.

Friendships

Children who are frequently absent often miss out socially and find it difficult to establish and maintain friendships.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents/carers, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Announce class attendance for the week in Friday Celebration Assembly for all classes. The class with the best attendance will receive the attendance trophy for the week. Classes who achieve 100% attendance will earn an extra playtime.
- Reward children on a termly basis if they have 100% attendance.
- Celebrate and give prizes to those children who achieve 100 % attendance all year.

Understanding types of absence: Every half-day absence from school has to 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 a good reason like illness, 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 and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been explained
- children who arrive at school after 9.30 a.m.
- days off school for shopping, or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been 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/carers and the child. If a 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.

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 prospects and we need parental 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/carers will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system.

Absence Procedures

If a child is absent parents/carers must:

- Contact us before 9 a.m. on the first day of absence, explaining the reason for the absence.
- Provide evidence of dentist/medical appointments, notifying school the day before the appointment where possible.

If a child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text parents/carers on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them.
- Invite parents/carers in to discuss the situation with our Education Welfare Officer and/or Principal if absences persist;
- Arrange a School Attendance Panel meeting where attendance targets will be set for a four week period.
- If absences continue parents/carers will be asked to attend a Governor Attendance Panel meeting.

Telephone numbers

There are times when we need to contact parents/carers about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have up to date contact numbers at all times.

The Education Welfare Officer

The academy has its own Education Welfare Officer whose role is to support parents and children in ensuring good attendance at school. Parents/carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful.

If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer. She will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, the Education Welfare officer can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day.

Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons. This can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

How we manage lateness

The school day starts at **8.55am (Key Stage 1 & Key Stage 2) and 9 a.m. (Foundation Stage)** Gates open at 8.50am and the whistle is blown at 8.55am.

Registers are marked at the official start time and children will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time. Children arriving late should report to the school office.

At **9.30 am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if a child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean parents/carers could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If a child has a persistent late record parents/carers will be asked to meet with the Principal and/or the Education Welfare Officer to resolve the problem.

Holidays in Term Time

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents/carers to help us by not taking children away in school time. There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

All applications for leave must be made by filling in the appropriate form and returning it to the Principal who will then arrange to discuss the application.

Leave of absence can only be granted in exceptional circumstances and cannot be authorised retrospectively. Holidays taken without prior agreement will be classed as unauthorised. The Education Welfare Officer will be informed and the Local Authority may decide to issue a penalty notice.

School Targets, Projects and Special Initiatives

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets. The minimum level of attendance for this school is **96 %** attendance and we will keep parents/carers updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares. Our target is to achieve better than this, however, because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made. Parents can keep track of the academy's attendance by visiting the attendance page on our website (www.willowsacademy.org.uk).

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