

Attendance Policy

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Overview

At The Willows Primary School we strongly believe that to provide excellent teaching and opportunities to our pupils, good attendance is crucial. To achieve their full academic and social potential children should be in school, on time, every day unless the absence is unavoidable. We aspire for our whole school attendance and for the attendance of individual children to be above 97%. Our curriculum is designed to be engaging and fast paced and any time lost to absence may have significant impact upon pupils and their attainment. Therefore, it is vital that we all work together to make school attendance a priority.

Regular school attendance is also a legal requirement and at The Willows Primary School we work closely with parents & guardians and the Local Authority to ensure this responsibility is met.

We recognize that barriers to attendance are often complex and may involve factors both within and outside of the school gates. We will continue to make sure that The Willows Primary School is a safe and happy environment so our pupils want to come to school each day. Each child will be welcomed and valued in our school community and will feel a strong sense of belonging. We will continue to cultivate trusting, friendly relationships with pupils and their families in order to better understand any barriers and offer support to overcome them.

Policy and Procedures

Attendance and punctuality issues are initially addressed by the school with a supportive approach. Parents are informed of concerns and assistance is offered to try and remedy problems. If this does not lead to an improvement in attendance then it is followed by a referral to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) who can provide an important link between school and families, but who can also invoke statutory action to ensure regular attendance if necessary.

To further support our Attendance Policy we:-

- Have clear registration procedures including appropriate reporting of absences or lateness. We complete registers accurately and promptly to allow us to quickly identify issues and address them.
- Have systems in place to ensure that attendance data is shared with the DfE and Local Authority in real time. This allows better analysis of not only individual attendance but also an overview of challenges and patterns which may affect different groups and cohorts within school. Particular attention is paid to those in receipt of Income Based Free School Meals, Looked After Children and those who are on the school SEN register to ensure they are receiving equitable opportunities to access their schooling. We produce termly attendance reports which are reported to our board of Governors.
- Share a termly attendance newsletter with our school community on Class Dojo and also post this on the school website.
- Support learning and positive attitudes to behaviour by investigating the barriers to good attendance through regularly scheduled attendance clinics with the Education Welfare Officer and Senior Leaders in school.
- Agree to administer medicine supplied from home under parental authorization. This is to support children to be able to attend school while exhibiting mild illness. If a child becomes unwell when in school we will contact parents and other authorized persons to collect them and their absence will be marked as authorized.
- Have developed individualized supportive systems of sanctions and rewards.
- Work with parents/guardians to support any families with their wellbeing and difficulties that may impact upon a child's attendance. We will facilitate support from partner agencies where appropriate, for example the EWO, School Nursing Team, CAMHS, Social Care. We have a 3 tier approach to attendance support
 - Tier 1 is universal where all children are made to feel welcome and all families are informed of expectations and attendance at regular intervals.
 - Tier 2 is tailored support for those pupils and families who require some school based additional support. This may involve letters or meetings with school staff in order to maintain or improve attendance.
 - Tier 3 is individualized support for those with significant barriers to attendance which requires intervention and support from external agencies.

Attendance Interventions

At frequent intervals Mrs Rudge, our Pupil Support Officer, will review the attendance of pupils who are below the 97% school target. We have a tiered system to respond to low or falling attendance but will also intervene quickly and bypass this system if there is a clear emerging issue with attendance. Attendance will be communicated as both a percentage and as the number of days missed to allow convenient and clear understanding by parents. All issued letters will be held on the pupil file for reference.

The below steps will be followed as a guide:-

Attendance falls below 96% (or 3 or more days of absence during the first half of the Autumn term)

- A letter of information (Letter 1 – Appendix A) will be sent to parents to notify parents of this attendance level and explain that attendance will be monitored.

Attendance between 90% and 95%

- Letter 1 (Appendix A) may be issued in this situation where attendance is sitting at this level or where circumstances are known. Following regular review, this letter may be issued a maximum of twice. If attendance is showing no significant improvement then steps will be followed as though the child had attendance of below 90%.
- Letter 2 (Appendix B) will be sent if attendance has continued to fall. This will invite parents to discuss reasons for absence with us and will state that no medical absences can be authorized without supplementary written evidence.
- Letter 3 (Appendix C) will be sent if attendance has continued to fall after Letter 2 has been issued or if there is a clear and immediate concern for attendance. This will be an invite for a formal attendance clinic with ourselves and the Education Welfare Officer to formally agree a plan of improvement.

Attendance below 90%

- Attendance of less than 90% by the end of the school year will represent at least 19 missed days and is a significant cause for concern. Children with less than 90% are known as Persistently Absent (PA). Parents will be invited via Letter 3 (Appendix C) to attend an Attendance Clinic to agree support and measures to improve. An Attendance Improvement Plan (Appendix G) will be put in place which will be reviewed at an agreed date. This meeting will be led by Mrs Rudge, the Pupil Support Officer, but other participants may be present including Pastoral Staff, School Leadership Team and the Education Welfare Officer. At this point it will again be clear that no further medical absences can be authorized without written evidence to verify the illness.

Attendance showing improvement

- When attendance has been an issue it is important that we recognize the efforts of our families to engage and improve. If Letter 2 or 3 has been issued and there is subsequent improvement we will issue Letter 4 (Appendix D) to acknowledge this. This will also reiterate that we are happy to provide support if any further problems emerge.

Pupils arriving to school late

- If a child arrives to school late on 3 or more occasions within a half term then Letter 5 (Appendix E) will be issued. This will inform of the impact of time missed, reiterate the timings of the school day and invite parents to share with us any circumstances which are interfering with arriving to school on time. Support to resolve issues will again be offered. If Letter 5 has previously been issued and there is no improvement or a deterioration in arriving on time, then parents will be invited to a more formal meeting to discuss barriers and agree a plan to improve – depending on circumstances this may be with our Pupil Support Officer or the designated Education Welfare Officer.

Class Registers and the Timings of the School Day

The school day is comprised of two 'sessions' and class teachers, or another designated adult, will record children as either present or absent in both morning and afternoon registers. Amendments and any reasons for these will be made by the school office (e.g. amending an absence to a 'late' mark if a child arrives after registers). The school office will be wholly responsible for recording illness or other reasons for absence.

	Morning Registers	Arrival after registers – late mark recorded	Registers closed – unauthorized absence recorded for session	Afternoon Registers	End of School Day
Nursery	9am	9.05am	9.30am	1pm	3.05pm
Reception	8.55am	9am	9.25am	1pm	3.05pm
Years 1 - 6	8.45am	8.50am	9.15am	1.30pm	3.15pm

Children that arrive late to school must be signed in by the parent or guardian who has brought them to school and a reason for lateness must be provided. Late arrivals are monitored at regular intervals and if children are persistently arriving late to school then this will result in school based interventions initially. If there is no further improvement then statutory action may be taken in conjunction with the Education Welfare Service.

Late collection of pupils at the end of the school day is monitored on a weekly basis. If a child is consistently collected late, parents are invited to attend a meeting to discuss punctuality with the Head Teacher/ Deputy Head Teacher. If school are unable to contact a parent or guardian by 4pm either through telephone or a door knock then local social services may be contacted for advice and support.

Absence Procedures

Authorized absence

Parents and guardians are legally responsible for ensuring that children of compulsory school age attend school regularly (the Education Act 1996). All absence will have an impact upon a child's education and in reporting attendance we will routinely provide information on total time missed from school. Absence can however, be divided into 2 categories – authorized and unauthorized absence. An absence is only authorized by school when the reason (e.g. illness, bereavement and religious observation) can be seen as a genuine explanation for the absence. This requires clear, honest communication and, in some cases, evidence to be provided by parents. Reporting illness does not automatically authorize absence and the school will carefully consider the legitimacy and weight of the information before recording it as such. Children not sleeping well or being a bit 'under the weather' does not constitute reasonable illness and may be recorded as unauthorized, for example. Late arrival after registers have closed is classified as an unauthorized absence.

Medical appointments

Appointments are expected to be made outside of school hours whenever possible. Where an appointment must fall within the school day evidence of the appointment must be provided to school in order for the absence to be recorded as authorized. It is expected that unless there are reasonable circumstances that children will attend before and after the appointment. If a child returns from the appointment during the session then the register will be amended to show their attendance.

Religious Observance

We recognize the diversity of our school community and in accordance with guidance provided by the Local Authority we can authorize 1 day of absence per religious observance i.e. Eid when requested **in advance**. Absence should be requested in writing via the form in the School Office, email or Class Dojo Messaging to the Office. Any further days of absence directly before or after the designated observance day will automatically be unauthorized by the school. It is important that permission for absence isn't presumed by parents and it must be recognized that we still need to establish the whereabouts and safety of pupils when not in school.

Reporting absence

Absence should be reported to the school office each day before 9.30am by either

- Calling 01782 233280 and selecting Option 1
- Sending a message to the school Office on Class Dojo
- By visiting the Front Desk
- By emailing attendance@willowsprimary.com

It is important that messages regarding absence are not sent via Class Teachers as they often do not have the opportunity to report this to the office or may not see messages until later in the day.

If a reason for absence is not provided to the School Office via these channels by 9.30am then we will initially text the first listed contact on the child's school profile. If no response then we will then phone parents and other contacts. If we are still unable to establish the whereabouts of a child, staff may then visit the home address where there is a concern for safety or request a Police Welfare check.

Leave of Absence during Term Time

The school year normally comprises of 190 days of education. It is important that children do not miss out on this valuable learning time unnecessarily. The law prohibits the Head Teacher of a school from granting leave of absence to a pupil, except where an advance application has been made by the parent or guardian with whom the child normally resides and they agree that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

In order to have requests for leave of absence to be considered we require a written application to be made at least 4 weeks in advance of the planned absence. This form is available on our school website, from the school office and as Appendix H at the end of this document. Any requests will be considered on an individual basis and the pupil's previous attendance record will be taken into account. If the leave is granted, a date for return will be specified and this will be recorded as authorized absence on the school register. Absence after this agreed date would be recorded as unauthorized and may be subject to statutory action. The decision of the Head Teacher is not subject to appeal and is final, however, requests will not be denied without good reason.

For the purpose of defining exceptional circumstances and as a guiding principle the Head Teacher may consider if the reasons for requesting leave are **rare, significant, unavoidable and short**. The following factors will also be considered:-

- Could the event reasonably take place in the school holidays?
- Attendance, punctuality and current attainment of the pupil(s) for whom the leave is requested

- Whether the leave is during any statutory assessment period or will significantly affect assessments
- Age and year of the pupil(s)
- Mitigating personal circumstances which the school have previously been made aware of

As a guide the following circumstances will **not** be considered exceptional. This list is not exhaustive.

- Availability of affordable holidays either UK or overseas
- Availability of desired accommodation
- Working patterns or availability of parental leave entitlement
- Attendance at family events of extended family or friends e.g. weddings and associated travel
- Visiting relatives either abroad or in the UK

If a parent does not submit an application for leave but we believe that the pupil has been taken on holiday, then we will write to parents or guardians to express our concern. The parent or guardian will be expected to provide evidence to the contrary by a specified date. If there is no supporting documentation then the absence will be recorded as unauthorized, a referral to the Local Authority will be made and a Penalty Notice may be issued. We do not condone families providing false information to avoid penalties and will investigate robustly if there are reasonable suspicions of unauthorized absence. Providing false information or failing to request leave does not protect against a referral to the Education Welfare Service.

Leave of absence cannot be granted retrospectively; therefore, any absence not approved in advance by the school will be recorded as unauthorized.

The current guidance for the issue of Penalty Notices by Stoke-on-Trent City Council is included as Appendix F and can be found on the school website www.willowsprimary.com

Contacting Our Attendance Team

This Attendance Policy is broad and designed to inform our whole school community of our expectations and procedures. We recognize that there will be a variety of individual circumstances surrounding attendance and welcome any questions or requests for support from our families. If you wish to speak to us please initially contact Mrs. Rudge, our Pupil Support Officer (arudge@willowsprimary.com). Our School Attendance Champion is Mrs Thursfield who can be contacted via sthursfield@willowsprimary.com.

Appendices

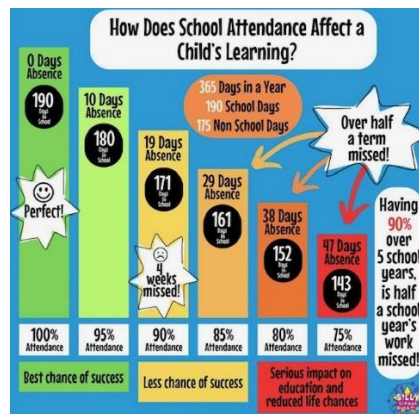
Appendix A – Letter 1 Initial Attendance Concerns

Parent/Guardian of «chosen_forename» «chosen_surname»

«date_of_printing»

Dear Parent/Guardian of «chosen_forename» «chosen_surname»

We have reviewed the school attendance registers and I am writing to inform you that «chosen_forename»'s attendance percentage is presently «percentage_attendance»%. This equates to _____ missed days this school year to date. The percentage will be affected by authorised absences that may be due to illness or appointments. As a school, we aim for an attendance percentage of 97% and appreciate parental support in achieving this.



Please be assured that, as the school year progresses, most pupils will naturally increase their percentage attendance and no further contact will be necessary. We will continue to monitor «chosen_forename»'s attendance and may contact you again if required. Keeping attendance under a regular review means we can work to quickly support families where attendance is a concern and help to set good habits for coming to school.

Please continue to work with us to improve attendance - aside from the statutory targets set by the Government, we know that children being in school consistently provides them with better opportunities to reach their full potential. If you wish to discuss this letter or if there is anything we are able to help with in order to improve your child's attendance, then please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Amy Rudge
Pupil Support Officer arudge@willowsprimary.com

Appendix B – Letter 2 Fallen or Continuing Poor Attendance

Parent/Guardian of «chosen_forename» «chosen_surname»
«address_block»

«date_of_printing»

Dear Parent/Guardian of «chosen_forename» «chosen_surname»

We previously wrote to you regarding «chosen_forename»'s attendance. Unfortunately, since this letter, «chosen_forename»'s attendance has not significantly improved – it is now «percentage_attendance»% which represents ____ missed school days. We are concerned that this may impact your child's learning, wellbeing and wider social development. I would invite you to contact me to discuss any barriers to «chosen_forename» attending school so that we can closely work together to ensure they are able to get the most out of their schooling. We have access to various external agencies and resources which may be of use and have regular attendance clinics where we can offer advice and support for families.

From the point of issue of this letter we are unable to authorise any absence from school without medical evidence. This can be in the form of

- an appointment card/letter,
- copy of prescriptions or
- production of medication which covers the absence period.

Unfortunately, without evidence, any absence will remain unauthorised. We will continue to monitor our registers and we hope that «chosen_forename»'s attendance will show improvement.

Thank you for your support with this – aside from the statutory targets set by the Government we know that children being in school consistently provides them with better opportunities to reach their full potential.

Yours sincerely,

Amy Rudge
Pupil Support Officer
arudge@willowsprimary.com

Appendix C – Letter 3 Invite to Attendance Clinic

Parent/Guardian of «chosen_forename» «chosen_surname»
«address_block»

«date_of_printing»

Dear Parent/Guardian of «chosen_forename» «chosen_surname»

Following our previous concerns regarding of «chosen_forename»'s attendance or punctuality it is now important that we meet to formally discuss a plan for improvement. I have enclosed a copy of «chosen_forename»'s registration record for your reference.

I would like to invite you to our Attendance Clinic on at to meet with ourselves and our Education Welfare Officer to discuss how we can work together to improve «chosen_forename»'s attendance. At this meeting we will discuss factors which may be causing issues with attendance and we hope to be able to offer support or resources to help resolve these.

If your child has any medical conditions that could result in low attendance could you please bring medical evidence of this along to the meeting? If you have any questions we will be happy to address these on the day of the meeting and of course I remain approachable ahead of this if you would like to speak beforehand.

Please could you contact us if you are unable to attend or to rearrange the meeting?

Yours sincerely,

Amy Rudge
Pupil Support Officer
arudge@willowsprimary.com

Appendix D – Letter 4 Improved Attendance

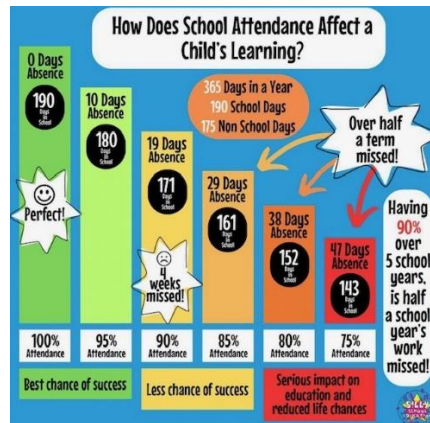
Parent/Guardian of «chosen_forename» «chosen_surname»

«date_of_printing»

Dear Parent/Guardian of «chosen_forename» «chosen_surname»

We have reviewed our registers and I am pleased to inform you that «chosen_forename»'s attendance percentage has improved from our last check and is currently «percentage_attendance»%.

We will continue to monitor «chosen_forename»'s attendance and look forward to seeing continued improvement as the year progresses.



Thank you for your support so far and the progress that is being made. Please continue to work with us to keep improving attendance. I am happy to offer support and advice and we have a variety of resources or agencies who can also help if there are barriers to your child attending school.

Yours sincerely,

Amy Rudge
Pupil Support Officer arudge@willowsprimary.com

Appendix E – Letter 5 Late Arrival to School

Parent/Guardian of «chosen_forename» «chosen_surname»

«date_of_printing»

Dear Parent/Guardian of «chosen_forename» «chosen_surname»

I am writing to inform you that «forename» has been late on ____ days so far this academic year

When pupils arrive late, they often miss essential instructions given at the beginning of the lesson which cannot be revisited. This can significantly reduce achievement, regardless of academic ability. Your child may also feel uncomfortable arriving to the classroom when everyone else is settled. Furthermore, when one pupil arrives late, it disrupts the entire class and the teacher. It is therefore essential that you ensure that your child arrives to school on time to prevent disruption to their own learning and that of others. A child who is late just five minutes each day will miss the equivalent of 3 school days over a school year which can have a significant impact.

The timings of the school day are:-

	Doors open	Registers	Arrival after registers – late mark recorded	Registers closed – unauthorised absence recorded for am session
Nursery	8.50-8.59am	9am	9.05am	9.30am
Reception	8.45-8.54am	8.55am	9am	9.25am
Years 1-6	8.35-8.45am	8.45am	8.50am	9.15am

The Local Authority monitors lateness, and the Education Welfare Officer may be in contact with you regarding this.

We value the supportive partnerships we have with our families and if there is anything that school can do to support «forename» getting to school on time, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Rudge
Pupil Support Officer
arudge@willowsprimary.com

Appendix F – Stoke-on-Trent Guidance for the Issue of Penalty Notices Relating to School Attendance



School Penalty Notices for Attendance are Changing from August 2024

With the introduction of the new National Framework for Penalty Notices, the following changes will come into effect for all those issued after 19th August 2024.

Per Parent, Per Child

Penalty Notice are issued to each parent, for each absent child.

For Example: 2 siblings absent for leave during term time would result in each parent receiving 2 separate Penalty Notices.

Third Offence

(Within 3 years)

The third time a Penalty Notice is issued for leave in Term Time or irregular attendance, the case will be presented to the Magistrates Court, where fines of up to £2500 per parent, per child can be imposed.

Note: Cases found guilty in Magistrates Court can show on Parents future DBS certificates as a 'Failure to safeguard a child's education'.

First Offence

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for Irregular Attendance or leave in Term Time the amount will be £160 per parent, per child when paid within 28 days.

This is reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.

10 sessions of Unauthorised absence in a 10-week period

Penalty Notices will be considered when there have been 10 sessions of Unauthorised absence in a 10-school week period.

These Absences can be late after register closes, Unauthorised Absences and Unauthorised Term Time leave absences. They can also be a combination of any of the above.

Second Offence

(Within 3 Years)

The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for Irregular Attendance or leave in Term Time the amount will be **£160 per parent, per child when paid within 28 days.**

Penalty Notices are issued by the Local Authority on the instruction from the School/Academy, in line with the Department for Education legislation. Once issued these cannot be withdrawn.

Appendix G – Attendance Improvement Plan

Further Notes & Actions

Attendance Improving?
☐ Yes – Move to close monitoring,
☐ No – Either further support offered or enforcement to be taken

Details of further actions :

Attendance Support – Tier 2 & 3

Name Class Date

Attendance this year

Attendance last year

Key Barriers

Avoidance ☐ Medical Issues ☐ Behaviour/Social ☐

Family Support ☐ EHCP ☐ Financial/Transport ☐

Other

Background

External Agency Involvement

Early Help / Family Star ☐

Registered ___/___/___

Notes & Actions:

Review ___/___/___

Notes & Actions:

Appendix H – Request for Leave of Absence



The Willows



Primary School

Explore - Dream - Discover

Greatbatch Avenue, Penkhull, Stoke-on-Trent ST4 7JY

Web: www.willowsprimary.com

Email: office@willowsprimary.com

Tel: (01782) 233280 Fax: (01782) 233282

Head Teacher: Mrs S Thursfield

Deputy Head: Mrs C Beltran

Assistant Head: Mrs A Ball

APPLICATION FORM FOR CHILD'S LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME

Important : Before completing this form please read the notes overleaf carefully

Child(ren)'s name and class(es)	
1	
2	
3	
Home address	
First day of leave requested	___/___/20___
My child will return to school on	___/___/20___
Reason for application for absence. Please provide as much detail as possible and continue on separate sheet if required	
I wish to make an application for my child/children named above to have authorised absence from school for the reasons stated. I understand that if this is not agreed, then any absences will be treated as unauthorised and may lead to the issue of a Penalty Notice or a Summons for irregular school attendance.	
Name of Parent(s)/ Guardian(s) making application	
Signed	
Date	

Office Use only

Number of sessions requested for this absence _____

Current attendance % 1. 2. 3.	Unauthorised half days in last 10 weeks
The above leave is authorised/not authorised (delete as applicable), in accordance with the school's procedures and attendance policy, available from the school website	
Signed	Date form received
A Rudge, Pupil Support Officer	

