
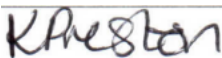




Policy/Procedure Name:	<b>ATTENDANCE POLICY</b>		
Last Update:	<b>August 2024</b>	Next Update Due:	<b>August 2026</b>

Author	<b>Alex Smythe</b>
Signature of Authorised Individual	
Signature of the Director	

## Rationale

At Willow Park School, we believe that education is essential for all. We recognise that punctual and regular school attendance is an essential to social inclusion and effective learning. We believe that children should attend school regularly and punctually because school plays a vital part in their learning and enables them to reach their full potential.

We rely on our partnership with parents/carers to ensure that this is achieved. We would ask parents/carers to help the school by notifying us of all absences on the first day and always to ensure that any absence is covered by a note on your child's return to school. Any absence for an essential appointment, which is known in advance, should be notified to the school in writing beforehand.

## Parents and Carers' Responsibility

Parents and carers have a primary role in ensuring the attendance of pupils. Good examples of attendance and timekeeping by staff and parents/carers provide role models for pupils. Parents/carers are notified about the importance of attendance and timekeeping. They are responsible for ensuring regular attendance and the importance of notifying the school office of absences.

As pupils are transported to Willow Park, we recognise that punctuality can be impacted by factors outside of parents'/carers' control. This will always be factored into decisions and discussions about pupils' attendance and punctuality.

## Authorised and Unauthorised Absences

It is for the school, not the parent/carer, to decide whether or not to authorise any absences. The school will not authorise absences in the following circumstances:

- Where no explanation is given by a parent/carer
- For holidays during term time
- For shopping trips, for example to purchase school shoes
- For leisure days out
- Where it is believed a parent is condoning an unnecessary absence.



## Requests for Time off School (Leave of Absence)

The Head Teacher will not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The application must be made in advance and the Head Teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrant the leave.

Where a leave of absence is granted, the Head Teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Head Teacher's discretion, but most absences due to a family holiday will be marked as unauthorised.

Retrospective approval for leave will not be given. Therefore, any absence request must be received in writing at least two weeks prior to the date of the holiday.

A 'Request for time off school' form is available in Appendix 2 of this policy.

- Only the school (and not parents/carers) can authorise an absence.
- Where the reason for a pupil's absence cannot be established at the time the register is taken, that absence shall be recorded as unauthorised.
- If a reason for absence is provided by the parent/carer, the school may decide to grant leave of absence which must be recorded as authorised using the appropriate national code.
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013 removed all references to family holidays and leave of absence shall not be granted unless an application had been made in advance and the Head Teacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to exceptional circumstances.
- Whilst the Head Teacher will consider all requests on a case-by-case basis, parents must be aware that requests will normally be refused.

## Unauthorised leave of absence

- Where a family chooses to take a holiday during term time, the absence will be coded as unauthorised and a Penalty Notice may be issued to each parent for each child (where 5 or more days of unauthorised absence are recorded as a result).
- If leave of absence is taken without the request having been agreed, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. This may result in the Local Authority issuing a Penalty Notice, in accordance with the Local Authority Code of Conduct, where there have been 10 sessions or more of unauthorised absence recorded.
- If this penalty is not paid the Local Authority may instigate legal proceedings against the parent/carer in the Magistrates Court.

## School Attendance and the Law Under the 1996 Education Act

Parents and carers are responsible for ensuring their children attend school regularly and punctually. Failure to do so could result in legal action being taken against them by the Local Authority.

## The Attendance Register

The register is a legal document and schools must, under the Education (Pupil Registration) School Attendance Guidance (Aug 2020) take a register at the start of the morning session, and again during the afternoon session.



Since September 2006, schools have been required to use statutory registration codes (see appendix 1).

The school is statutorily required to take an attendance register twice daily. Willow Park School will take the attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the afternoon session. On each occasion we will record whether every learner is:

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

This will be recorded using the codes in Appendix 1.

## **First Day Absence**

If a child is absent for any reason, parents/carers must let the school know as early as possible. This information will be placed on the register when it has been received.

If the school does not know why a child is absent, we will endeavour to make contact with the parents.

Every case of absence is examined and safeguarding is paramount. If a learner is absent and we have been unable to contact the parent/carer to establish the reason for absence then a member of staff may perform a home visit.

If we have not heard from carers and the learner is on a Children Protection Plan, is defined as a Child in Need by the local authority or if we have concerns about the welfare of the child then we will inform the social worker and any home visit by us will take place on day 1 of the absence.

## **Authorised Absence**

Every absence (am/pm) will be classified as authorised or unauthorised. Authorised absences include events such as:

- Illness
- Bereavement
- Interview
- Medical appointments (where every eventuality has been made to make this outside School hours)
- Approved sporting activities.
- 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

## **Unauthorised Absence**

'Unauthorised Absence' is a period of absence which the school does not consider reasonable and no authorization for leave of absence has been issued. This may include events such as:

- Family holidays
- Truancy
- Unexplained absences



A parent may offer an explanation for their child's absence, but the law clearly states that it is the Head teacher's decision as to whether it is felt the explanation offered by a parent for an absence is justified.

## **Children Missing Education (and persistently absent)**

In compliance with the Education Act 436A (Chapter 2 Part 6) the school will, after making appropriate checks, report all Children Missing from Education to the Local Authority, Education Welfare Service, who has a duty to investigate the whereabouts of such children and negotiate their prompt return to suitable education.

A child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse and neglect, including sexual abuse or sexual exploitation. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will monitor unauthorised absence, particularly where children go missing on repeated occasions.

The school follows DfE legal requirements for schools in respect of recording and reporting of children who leave school without any known destination and work closely with local authorities when necessary.

Where a child has 10 consecutive school days of unauthorised absence and reasonable steps have been taken by the School to establish the whereabouts without success, the school will make an immediate referral to the Early Help Team.

Reasonable steps include:

- Telephone calls to all known contacts
- Letters home (including recorded delivery)
- Contact with other schools where siblings may be registered
- Possible home visit where safe to do so
- Enquires through friends, neighbours etc. through school contacts
- Enquiries with any other service known to be involved with the family
- Request a Police Welfare Check (after 5 days)

All contacts and outcomes should be recorded on Horizons (the school's MIS)

If the child is not found, the school will complete a Child Missing From Education form (CME) contact [cme@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:cme@warwickshire.gov.uk). For urgent concerns About a child's safety or well-being which requires immediate action, call the Warwickshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) (and police if appropriate) without delay on 01926 414144.

## **Strategies for promoting attendance**

### Attendance Rewards

It is essential that we celebrate good attendance, and we do this in a number of different ways:

- Attendance displays
- Positive phone calls home
- Positive attendance texts
- Attendance post cards
- Certificates

Those pupils whose attendance starts to decline due to regular unexplained absence will be subject to discussion at the weekly attendance meetings. Strategies to improve attendance will be



discussed and interventions recorded. For those pupils who fall below 90% and are classified as a persistent absentee (PA) and where unauthorised absence exists school may apply a staged intervention toward formal proceedings:

## **Stage 1**

All pupils will have their attendance monitored on a weekly basis. Where a concern is raised over an individual's attendance, a home visit will be made and parents/carers will be issued with a letter, setting out our concerns, and a certificate of attendance. This is followed by a monitoring period of up to 4 weeks which can include phone calls, text messages and home visits by school staff– all contact will be recorded.

## **Stage 2**

Following an attendance review over a period of 4 weeks and, if there is no significant improvement, a further home visit will be completed and a second letter will be issued informing parents/carers that if any further absences are to be authorised, then there needs to be medical evidence explaining the absence. A pupil re-engagement plan may be issued to re-engage pupils or create a more suitable personalised timetable.

## **Stage 3**

Pupils who have reached stage 3 of the Attendance Procedures will be closely monitored. A formal meeting will take place and weekly targets will be set – these will be monitored on a weekly basis. A pupil re-engagement plan will be issued to re-engage pupils or create a more suitable personalised timetable. Parents/carers will be issued with a 'final notice' letter informing them that failure to comply will result in possible prosecution by the Local Authority.

## **Stage 4**

If all previous interventions have failed and following a final attendance review a letter will be sent out to notify parents/carers that an attendance referral will be sent to the Local Authority for a prosecution to be pursued.

## **Monitoring Attendance**

Attendance will be reviewed at SLT meetings weekly and an Attendance File will be maintained. The Principal is responsible for tracking and monitoring attendance.

Pupils who have an average below 90% will have a letter of support/concern sent home, unless the attendance is due to a known medical issue. Throughout the half term, telephone calls home regarding attendance issues will be made and, if necessary, meetings convened.

## **Equality Statement**

At Willow Park School, we actively seek to encourage equity and equality through our teaching and our employment practices. As such, we seek to advance the equality of opportunity between people who share any of the following characteristics:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- being married or in a civil partnership
- being pregnant or on maternity leave



- race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

The use of stereotypes under any of the above headings will always be challenged.

### **Inclusion**

Our school is an inclusive school. We aim to make all pupils feel included in all our activities. We try to make all our teaching fully inclusive. We recognise the entitlement of all pupils to a balanced, broadly-based curriculum. We have systems in place for early identification of barriers to their learning and participation so that they can engage in school activities with all other pupils. We acknowledge the need for high expectations for and of all children.



## Appendix 1: attendance codes – Internal use only

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
<b>Authorised absence</b>		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment



<b>R</b>	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
<b>S</b>	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
<b>T</b>	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
<b>Unauthorised absence</b>		
<b>G</b>	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
<b>N</b>	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
<b>O</b>	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
<b>U</b>	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Scenario</b>
<b>X</b>	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
<b>Y</b>	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
<b>Z</b>	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
<b>#</b>	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day





## Willow Park School REQUEST FOR TIME OFF SCHOOL FORM

Please **complete all shaded boxes on this form**

Name of Child(ren)	Class

Name of Parent(s)/Carer(s)	Date(s) of Proposed Absence	No. of school days child(ren) would miss

Please indicate the **reasons for this absence.**

*If this is for a holiday, please indicate why this holiday could not take place in the course of the normal holiday pattern (please see the attached – guide for parents before writing your reasons)*

<p style="color: purple; margin: 0;"><b>Signature</b> of Parents/Carers with <b>Legal Responsibility for the Child</b></p> <p style="font-size: small; margin: 0;">(please use an electronic signature where possible – we will send this back to you for signing if not)</p>	Date	<p style="font-size: small; margin: 0;"><b>If this request is for a term time holiday</b>, I confirm that the holiday has been...</p>	
		booked	Not booked

**Please return this form to school before any booking is made if this is for a holiday to be taken during term time**

**for office use only** ✂-----

Child(ren)'s name(s)	Attendance percentage(s) over last 12 months

Dates Requested

Authorised
Not Authorised
Subject to further information from parents

THIS ABSENCE REQUEST IS

--	--	--

**Reasons** for the decision\*

Name Signed Date

**Head teacher**

--	--	--

\*please refer to the 'Guide for Parents'



## Willow Park School Term-time requests for TIME OFF SCHOOL – A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

Term-time holidays are intended for children whose parents are unable to take holiday at any other time.

Willow Park School will consider every application individually; its policy is NOT to grant leave of absence for a holiday other than in the most exceptional circumstances. Time off school for family holidays **is not a right**. An application must be made in writing, with appropriate evidence, **in advance** of the intended holiday.

The law states that schools should not authorise leave of absence unless:

- ✓ An application has been made **in advance** by the parent with whom the pupil normally resides AND;
- ✓ The Head teacher considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

Willow Park School will consider authorising holidays for (exceptional circumstances):

- ✓ service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays out of term-time;
- ✓ when a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis;
- ✓ parents who are subject to a strict and un-negotiable holiday rota and evidence is provided to this effect.

Requests for holidays for the following reasons will not be authorised:

- cheaper cost of holiday;
- availability of the desired accommodation;
- poor weather experienced in school holiday periods; or
- overlap with beginning or end of term.

Willow Park School will respond to all requests for a leave of absence in writing giving the reasons for the decision.

Willow Park School will NOT authorise a holiday during periods of national tests ie: SATs examinations.

### Extended leave of absence

In considering absence for extended trips overseas Willow Park School will take account of the following:

- ✓ a visit to family overseas has a very different significance from a normal 'holiday';
- ✓ such visits may be important in terms of children's identity and self-esteem as they grow up;
- ✓ parents may feel that the reasons for their visit outweigh the importance of their child's uninterrupted attendance at school (although parents could be encouraged to use the school holiday periods for at least part of their trip);
- ✓ the reasons for wishing to make a visit is more difficult, particularly for minority ethnic families, where huge distances and high costs are involved.
- ✓ Where extended leave of absence is granted there will be an expectation that the pupil undertakes some school-set work during this period.