



Attendance Policy

WILLOW GROVE PRIMARY SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

School Aims:

As a school, it is our aim to ensure that all of our children have the best possible start in life. A key part of this focus is through regular and sustained attendance at school where each child has an attendance percentage of no less than 97%. To achieve such aims we endeavour to inform our children and their parents/carers of the significance of good attendance and use appropriate methods to celebrate and support in equal measure.

A child's attendance at school has a direct relationship to their academic achievement and henceforth their employment opportunities. We know that missing school cannot always be avoided, particularly through illness, yet it is important to be aware of the time a child spends out of the classroom.

Parents can support the school:

- Ensuring your child arrives at school promptly, in uniform, equipped and ready to learn. It is the parent/carers responsibility for ensuring their child attends school.
- Arranging medical and dental appointments outside of school hours wherever possible.
- Making the school aware of your child's absence:
 - By 8:45am on the first morning of absence by calling the school. Please tell us the reason for absence and expected return date.
 - Keep us updated of extended periods of absence due to illness by letter or telephone. For certain individual circumstances, a doctor's note may be required.

As a School we will:

- Have a designated Attendance Champion who parents can contact regarding attendance. This can be done via the school office. This is Mrs Kennedy – Headteacher.
- Monitor attendance levels by taking twice daily registration and reviewing half termly data.
 - We will use this information to contact parents to offer support where attendance is of concern.
- Act sensitively to the needs of children and their families and offer support through the school and/or external agencies as necessary.
- Praise good attendance
- Monitor attendance weekly and inform the class teacher
- Communicate with parents any concerns for attendance
- Keep parents informed when levels of attendance fall below 95% and then below 90%. We might be aware of circumstances affecting attendance but we would always like to make parents aware of the time their child has spent in school.
 - When attendance falls below 90% we will endeavour to support the child and their family by meeting with them and agreeing on an Attendance Contract, designed to raise attendance in the following half term.
- Monitor lateness across the year and most recent half term to identify patterns and concerns and then to work with families on improvement strategies.
- Make referrals to Bedford Borough or Central Bedfordshire Local Authorities where significant or sustained breaches of our attendance policy have taken place, possibly resulting in Fixed Penalty Notices.

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Legal Requirements:

Parents are responsible for making sure that their children of compulsory school age receive a "suitable efficient full-time education" as set out in section 7 of the Education Act 1996. Under section 444 of the act, a pupil is required to "attend regularly at the school where they are a registered pupil".

The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. Only if the school is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by the letter/message will the absence be authorised. For certain individual circumstances, all absence will be recorded as unauthorised unless proof of illness through a doctor's note is provided.

Authorised Absence:

Parents should be aware that it is the school that decides, namely the head teacher, whether an absence is to be authorised or unauthorised. A letter or other communication does not in itself authorise an absence.

The following reasons for treating a child's absence as authorised are:

- because of sickness or some other unavoidable cause.
 - Where children have had a tummy bug, they should not return to school until 24 hours after their last bout of sickness: this is to prevent cross contamination/infection as even once the symptoms have alleviated the children may still be at risk of infecting others.
- because of a day of religious observance by the religious body to which parents belong.
- when participating in approved public performance
- following the death of a close member of the family.
- when on an approved visit to another school or educational visit.

Absences when a child is sick or has a medical or dental appointment which cannot be arranged out of school hours will be authorised. However, if the absence concerns a medical or dental issue related to another member of the family, the school will not usually be able to authorise this absence

Unauthorised Absence:

There are times when a child's absence is not permitted by law. These are known as "unauthorised absences" and may include the following examples:

- Keeping children off school without a good reason
- Truancy from a whole session
- Keeping a child off school because a parent/carer is ill
- Travelling with a child for work purposes
- Absences that have never been properly explained
 - Children arriving at school too late to get a mark
 - Taking holidays during term-time.
 - The school is **unable** to consider or grant any authorised leave of absence for holidays or days out. This applies to all children regardless of SEND needs and SEND needs alone does not equate to exceptional circumstances.

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The Department for Education has removed the discretion of Headteachers to grant leave in term time unless there are 'exceptional circumstances'. It is up to the discretion of the Headteacher to determine, on a case by case basis, what are 'exceptional circumstances' and the number of days a child can be away if leave is granted. If leave is not agreed, under the new national framework (February 2024), all schools will be required to consider a fine when a child has missed 10 or more sessions (5 days) for unauthorised reasons.

In the case of repeated fines, if a parent receives a second fine for the same child within any three-year period, this will be charged at the higher rate. Fines per parent will be capped to two fines within any three-year period. Once this limit has been reached, other action like a parenting order or prosecution will be considered.

The School Day:

Children are welcome into school from 8:20am. Registration begins at 8:30am. Any child arriving after this, will be marked as present but arriving late and must register in the school's main reception. The register will close 30 minutes later. Children arriving after this time will be recorded as late (after the register closed) which will be an unauthorised absence for that session. The school monitors lateness on a half termly basis.

Leave of Absence Requests in Exceptional Circumstances:

In the best interest of our children, the school is **unable** to consider or grant any authorised leave of absence for holidays or days out.

Any 'exceptional circumstance' leave of absence requests must be received at least 10 school days in advance to enable us to have time to consider the request and respond appropriately. Parents need to be aware that authorisation for these events is at the discretion of the Headteacher; it is not guaranteed.

Parents are asked to complete a Leave of Absence Request Form and submit this to the school. Following a subsequent review of the request the school will respond with its decision.

The Headteacher will consider each request individually and will also consider the child's attendance and punctuality record for previous years and up to the date the request is made.

For 'exceptional circumstance' events, 1 day's absence only will usually be authorised.

Children Leaving Willow Grove Primary School before Year 6:

We understand that, for a variety of reasons, children leave Willow Grove before transitioning at the end of year 6. If this affects you and your child we kindly ask for the following:

- Provide us with the date of your relocation, new address, mobile number, new school, start date at new school (when known) and reasons for leaving.
- Take our school's compliments slip so that the new school can easily contact us and records can be transferred.