



Willow Bank Junior School

Attendance Policy

Non-statutory policy

<i>Version</i>	<i>Last Review</i>	<i>Next Review</i>	<i>Committee</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1.0	March 2014	March 2017	FGB	New policy based on LA guidance
1.1	January 2017	January 2020	FGB	Insertion of sentence in Monitoring Attendance of the governors' role.
2.0	February 2020	February 2023	FGB	Rewritten in line with the LA's model policy.
3.0	February 2023	February 2026	FGB	Updated in line with model LA policy
4.0	October 2024	February 2026		Updated to include National Framework and new codes

Introduction

Willow Bank Junior School strives to maintain a whole school attendance target of above 96% and seeks to ensure all of its pupils receive a full-time education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise their true potential.

A pupil who takes 10 days holiday in each academic year could lose the equivalent of 22 weeks (almost 2 terms) of learning during their school career. We work with pupils and their families to ensure each pupil attends school regularly and punctually. In addition, the school strives to provide a welcoming, caring environment and make each member of the school community feel wanted and secure.

This policy is based upon the requirements contained within:

- The Education Act 2002;
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended by The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016;
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended by The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 and The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013;
- Department for Education Statutory Guidance *“Working together to improve school attendance”* 2024

The Education Act 2002 requires parents/carers to ensure their child receives an efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. The Supreme Court has determined that ‘regular’ attendance means that which is **“in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school”** (*Isle of Wight Council v Platt*, 6th April 2017).

Registration Procedures

Class registers are legal documents and the school has a responsibility to ensure the information recorded in them is accurate. Attendance codes specified by the Department for Education will be used accordingly.

Morning registration takes place at 8.55am and pupils who arrive after this time will be recorded as late to school. Registers close at 9.15am and after this lateness is recorded as an unauthorised absence. In severe weather conditions exceptions to this ruling may apply at the Headteacher’s discretion. Afternoon registration takes place at 1.10pm with registers closing at 1.30pm. Children arriving after registration must report to the school office to be signed in.

Authorised Absences

Authorised absence is when the school accepts the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence OR has given approval in advance.

Absences will be authorised for:

- sickness (medical evidence may be requested if there is a high level of absence)
- medical or dental appointments (whenever possible made outside school hours)
- days of religious observance
- exceptional family circumstances (e.g. bereavement)

When a child is ill parents or guardians must contact the school office by 9:30am on the first day of absence and keep the school updated on subsequent days of absence. Failure to do this will prompt

a telephone enquiry from the school office. Other reasons for absence should be discussed with the school each time with prior notice whenever possible (e.g. a forthcoming day of religious observance).

Unauthorised Absences

Unauthorised absence is when the school does not accept an explanation as being reasonable justification for the absence OR when no explanation has been provided despite a written request being sent to parents/carers OR when the Headteacher has not approved a parent/carer's request for leave of absence.

Absences will not be authorised for:

- days out
- shopping trips
- birthdays or similar events
- looking after family members (except in exceptional circumstances)
- lie-ins following a late night
- family holidays (except in exceptional circumstances – see separate section below)

The Headteacher will determine whether the reason given for requesting leave of absence is exceptional or not. Please also note that there is no automatic right to take holidays in term time nor will your child/ren's overall attendance affect the Headteacher's decision.

In the case of long term or frequent absences due to illness or a medical condition, supporting evidence may be requested. This could be in the form of a date-stamped compliment slip from a doctor's surgery or a copy of a prescription. The school is not asking any parent/carer to incur a cost for such information and will not be liable for any cost.

Term Time Leave of Absence

The school recognises that there may be occasions when a parent/carer considers there are extenuating or compassionate reasons for an absence in term time. The law has removed the right for schools to grant up to 10 days' leave of absence, in special circumstances, for the purposes of a family holiday and there is no automatic right to take any leave or holiday in term time. As outlined in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016, the Headteacher can only grant leave of absence if the circumstances are considered 'exceptional' in which case the pupil's absence will be authorised.

The school's holiday dates and other important dates (e.g. bank holidays) are published on the school's website and parents/carers are asked to note these when planning holidays and family events. If there are exceptional reasons for requesting a leave of absence during term time, the following procedures will apply:

- The parent/s or carer/s with whom the pupil normally resides must complete and submit a Leave of Absence Form (Appendix) at least one month in advance of the requested absence. Forms are available from the school office and can be downloaded from the school website (<https://www.willowbankjunior.com/attendance-and-absence/>)
- The Headteacher will consider the application and will decide whether or not it can be granted on the basis of 'exceptional' circumstances. Each application will be considered on a case-by-case basis depending upon the specific circumstances of the particular application. The school will endeavour to respond within 5 working days to the parent/s or carer/s who submitted the application.
- Where leave of absence is granted, the pupil's absence will be authorised.
- A one-off period of irregular attendance, such as an unauthorised period of leave in term time, can result in a referral being made to the Education Welfare Service and this may result

in the issuing of a Penalty Notice in accordance with Wokingham Borough Council's Code of Conduct.

- The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is £60 per parent/carer, per child, if paid within 21 days of receipt of the Notice, rising to £120 per parent/carer, per child, if paid between 22 and 28 days. (Figures correct as of 1st February 2023.)
- If a Penalty Notice remains unpaid after 28 days, the matter may result in each parent/carer being liable for prosecution in the Magistrates Court for failure to ensure their child's regular attendance at school contrary to Section 444 of the Education Act 2002.

Monitoring Attendance

The school's administrative staff check the class registers daily and follow-up any unexplained absences. They also advise the Headteacher of any concerns, e.g. patterns of broken weeks, low level attendance.

Each term, any children whose attendance falls below 90% will be sent a letter which aims to support families in maintaining high levels of attendance. If attendance doesn't improve and reach above 90% for the following term, the parents/carers may be invited to attend a meeting with the Headteacher to agree an Attendance Action Plan. If this fails to improve attendance, the school will consider making a formal referral to the Education Welfare Service which has a statutory responsibility to pursue non-school attendance and persistent lateness.

When a pupil is referred to the Education Welfare Service, there are various actions that can be taken to address attendance concerns. In certain circumstances, and in accordance with Wokingham Borough Council's Code of Conduct, Penalty Notices may be used to bring about an improvement to a pupil's attendance. Before a Penalty Notice is issued, parents will be warned of their liability to receive such a notice.

The Fast Track Intervention may also be offered as an early intervention measure, designed to ensure that appropriate action is taken to address school attendance concerns. Fast Track involves engaging parents and identifying what improvements and actions need to be achieved over a fixed time frame (usually 8 or 12 weeks).

Parents/carers have a legal responsibility for ensuring their child attends school regularly. Where a parent/carer fails in this responsibility and no improvement is brought about within the specified time frame, legal proceedings are initiated in the Magistrates Court.

The school's monitoring of attendance is checked regularly by the safeguarding governor and by the governing body once a term, as evidenced in the Headteacher's report.

Changing Schools

Parents/carers who decide to send their child to a different school must inform the Headteacher in writing as soon as possible. A pupil will not be removed from the school roll until the following information has been received:

- the date the pupil will be leaving this school and starting at their new school;
- the name and address of the new school;
- the new home address, if appropriate.

The pupil's school records will then be sent to the new school. In the event that the above information is not supplied, the family will be referred to the Education Welfare Service and after four weeks the pupil will be registered on the S2S website as a 'Pupil Missing Education'.

Elective Home Education

Parents/carers have a duty to ensure that their child receives a suitable full-time education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. The law allows parents/carers to choose to educate children at home instead of sending them to school. This is known as 'Elective Home Education'.

Should parents/carers wish to follow this route, they need to put this in writing to the Headteacher with a request that their child is removed from the school roll. The school will then inform the Education Welfare Service and arrangements will be made to monitor the education put in place at home.

Publicity

To keep families fully informed the following documents are made available on the school's website:

- Attendance Policy
- LA's Penalty Notice Code of Conduct
- Leave of Absence Form

Information about the policy will be placed periodically in the school's newsletter (In Touch).

Absence and attendance codes

The national codes enable schools to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with the regulations. They are also used for collecting statistics through the School Census System. The data helps schools, local authorities and the Government to gain a greater understanding of the level of, and the reasons for absence. The summary of codes are shown below. The full explanation of codes can be found [here](#);

\	Present
L	Late (Before register closes)
U	Late (After register closes)
	Absent (Approved Educational activity):
K	Attending education provision <i>arranged by the local authority</i>
V	Attending an educational visit or trip
P	Participating in a sporting activity
W	Attending work experience
B	Attending any other approved activity
D	Dual registered at another school
	Absent (authorised):
C1	Participating in regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad
M	Medical or dental appointment
J1	Attending an interview for employment or admission to another educational institution (grammar schools/entrance exams)
S	Studying for a public examination
X	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school
C2	Pupils on a part time timetable
C	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstances
T	Parent travelling for occupational reasons
R	Religious observance
I	Illness
E	Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made
	Authorised (as not a possible attendance):
Q	Unable to attend school due to a lack of access arrangements
Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available
Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel
Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed
Y4	Unable to attend due to whole school site being unexpectedly closed
Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention
Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
Y7	Unable to attend because of an unavoidable cause (nature of emergency)
	Unauthorised absences:
G	Holiday not granted by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established (<i>to be removed and replaced with correct code once known</i>)
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances
	Admin Codes (not collected for statistical purposes)
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register
#	Planned whole school closure

Further sources of information

Relevant legislation

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016

The Education Act 2002

The Education (School Day and School Year) (England) Regulations 1999

The Changing of School Session Times (England) (Revocation) Regulations 2011

The Education and Inspections Act 2006

Other DfE guidance

Parental responsibility measures for school attendance and behaviour

Children missing education

Keeping children safe in education

[Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance)

LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST FORM

The Department for Education has advised schools to only authorise leave of absence in 'exceptional' circumstances, hence School will not approve any absence in term time, except in such circumstances. The Headteacher will determine whether the reason given for requesting leave of absence is exceptional or not. Please also note that there is no automatic right to take holidays in term time nor will your child/ren's overall attendance affect the Headteacher's decision.

Please complete the section below and return to school at least one month before the requested absence. School will endeavour to respond to your request within 5 working days. If your request for leave of absence is approved your child will be expected to collect and complete all missed work. Please note that taking your child away during the school term is detrimental to their educational progress.

Please be aware that if holidays are taken without approval, this information will be passed to our Education Welfare Officer. Taking an unauthorised holiday is a Criminal Offence and may result, depending on the circumstances of each case, in either a Penalty Notice being issued or Prosecution in the Magistrates Court. Penalty notices are issued to each parent, per child and may be issued without further warning.

The first penalty notice issued to a parent will be charged at £80 if paid within 21 days. This will be increased to £160 if paid within 28 days. A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days. A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

If a penalty notice is not paid then the Parents may be prosecuted in the Magistrates Court. In some cases, a Penalty notice will not be offered at all and the matter referred immediately for Prosecution.

In the Court the penalty is a fine of up to £1000 and a Criminal Record. More information can be found on the Wokingham Borough Council website or from the Education Welfare Service.

Pupil's name.....Date of Birth.....Year/Class

Reason for leave of absence in term time: (This must be completed) If the absence is for religious observance, please include the name and contact details of your place of worship.

Absence Period from (1st day of absence).....to (return date to school).....

Number of school days to be missed

Sibling details Name(s) / School(s)

Full Name of Parent / Carer 1

Full Name of Parent / Carer 2.....

Signature/s of Parent/s / Carer/s.....Date:.....

School use only

Has leave of absence already been taken this school year? Yes No

This request for leave of absence is Approved Not Approved

Signed:.....Name:..... Date:.....