

The Willows Primary School

Attendance Policy

Rationale

The Willows Primary School seeks to ensure that all its pupils receive a full-time education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise his/her true potential. The school will strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels wanted and secure.

All school staff will work with pupils and their families to ensure each pupil attends school regularly and punctually.

To meet these objectives, The Willows Primary School will establish an effective and efficient system of communication with pupils, parents and appropriate agencies to provide mutual information, advice and support.

Aims

1. To improve the overall percentage of pupils attending school.
2. To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school including pupils, parents, teachers, office and support staff and governors.
3. To develop a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks.
4. To provide support, advice and guidance to parents and pupils.
5. To develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data.
6. To further develop positive, consistent communication between home and school.
7. To implement a system of rewards and sanctions.
8. To promote effective partnerships with the Education Social Work Service and with other services and agencies.
9. To recognise the needs of the individual pupil when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence.

The school will follow this policy alongside the Stoke-on-Trent City Council Code of Conduct for the issuing of Penalty Notices 2018 (this can be found as an appendix 1 at the end of this policy)

Parental Responsibility

Under section 444 of the Education Act of 1996 parents' or those who have parental responsibility for children of compulsory school age, are required to ensure that their children receive an efficient full time education. Children are required to attend and stay at school. It is not appropriate for the school to authorise absences for shopping, looking after younger siblings, day trips, hairdresser's appointments, etc. Leave may; however, be granted in an emergency, e.g. bereavement or medical appointments which cannot take place outside school time. This responsibility also extends to ensuring that the children arrive at school on time, suitably dressed and in a fit condition to learn. It is also the parent's responsibility to inform school of the reasons for their child's non-attendance by 09:30 on the first day of absence and keep the school regularly updated as required.

Procedures for reporting your child's absence

- By email to attendance@willowsprimary.com
- By telephone no later than 09:30 on the first day of absence.
- By written letter to the office on the first day of absence.
- In person at the school office on the first day of absence.
- By showing an appointment card or letter in advance at the school office.
- By completing an application of leave of absence in exceptional circumstances in term time, which is available from the school office.

It is requested that messages are not sent via a child, sibling or another parent/carer, as they may not be passed on.

In the event of a child contracting an illness or suffering an injury, which would make an absence of 5 days or more very likely, parents should inform the school immediately and subsequently keep the school informed on their progress.

In the event of non-communication of a reason for absence, the following procedures will apply:

- A text message via teachers2parents will be sent by Mrs Burgess or Mrs Wilson (Pupil Support Officer)
- If no response is received, a telephone call will be made to all of the contacts on the SIMS contact list.
- If still no contact has been received, our Pupil Support Officer, Safeguarding Officer or senior leadership team, may complete an unannounced door knock on the same day.

If the above is unsuccessful then the Pupil Support Officer will follow up with further letters etc.

The Pupil Support Officer will inspect school registers regularly and parents contacted in the event of:

- Persistent unauthorised absence.
- Frequent short absences, particularly where a pattern emerges; e.g. every Friday.
- Persistent lateness.

Contact will be made by:

- A letter from the Pupil Support Officer informing parents of their child's percentage attendance.
- A letter from the Pupil Support Officer informing parents of their child's continued percentage attendance and asking for medical evidence to support further absence.

- A letter inviting parent/guardian into school to meet with the Education Welfare Officer.
- If attendance percentage continues to fall, a penalty notice warning letter will be sent home.
- If attendance percentage falls below 80%, a referral to the Education Welfare department will be submitted.

Leave of absence in Exceptional Circumstances

The law states that parents DO NOT have an automatic right to take their child out of school during term-time. Any holiday leave in term time will not be authorised by the Head Teacher.

From 1st January 2019, any period of unauthorised absence may result in you as a parent receiving a penalty notice fine. Your Head Teacher will continue to be the only person able to authorise leave in term time, but this will apply only in exceptional circumstances. Any unauthorised leave taken may be referred by the Head Teacher into the local authority and a penalty Notice Payment may be applied. Please see appendix 1 at the end of this policy.

Attendance Rewards

To promote good attendance, the school issues a number of rewards:

- A trophy is awarded, and kept for a week, to the classes (one in KS1 and the other in KS2) who have achieved the best weekly attendance.
- Certificates will be awarded for 100% termly attendance at the end of the each term and for 100% annual attendance at the end of the academic year. In addition, those children achieving 100% annual attendance will receive a gift.
- Parents are informed of attendance targets and kept up to-date of classes' achievement via awards assemblies and newsletters.

Staff and Governors expect full and punctual attendance from all pupils.

Termly attendance percentages will be reported to the Governing Body via the Head teacher's report and to parents via newsletters.

Principles

- Parents of registered pupils have a legal duty under the Education Act 1996 to make sure that children of compulsory school age attend school on a regular and full-time basis. Permitting unauthorised absence from school is an offence and parents may be reported to the Education Authority if problems cannot be resolved by agreement.
- Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents) as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required.
- Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason (illness or other unavoidable cause).
- Unauthorised absences are those, which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no permission has been given. This includes keeping children off school unnecessarily, truancy, absences which have not been properly explained.
- Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents 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 may make things worse.
- Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving problems together. This is nearly always successful. If problems cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) from the Local Authority (LA) who will also try to resolve the difficulties by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, this officer can use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child.
- Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the EWO themselves to ask for advice. They are independent of the school. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting The LA (01782 235355).

Procedures

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

Illness and Other Legitimate Reasons

- If a pupil is unfit for school, parents are asked to contact the school on the first day of absence before 9:30 am. Absences will not be authorised without this procedure. In exceptional circumstances, further evidence of a child's illness, such as a doctor's note or an appointment card may be requested. Other reasons for absence must be discussed with the school each time. It is not appropriate for the school to authorise absences for shopping, looking after younger children, day trips, hairdresser's appointments, etc. Leave may; however, be granted in an emergency (e.g. bereavement) or for medical appointments which cannot take place during school time.
- If a pupil is absent at morning registration and the school has not received an explanation for the absence by 10.00 am, the Pupil Welfare Assistant will contact the parent by telephone as a matter of concern.
- Holidays, all holiday leave in term time will not be authorised. Pupils who take a holiday in term time will be expected to complete extra work to make sure they do not fall behind.
- Lateness, pupils must attend on time to be given a mark for that session, unless the lateness is unavoidable. Parents are expected to ensure that pupils are present at registration. A late mark is awarded if arrival is between 9:00 and 9:30am. An ultra-late mark is given if arrival is after 9:30am.

Date agreed: