

### WILLINGDON COMMUNITY SCHOOL

#### ATTENDANCE POLICY

This policy reflects the vision and aims of Willingdon Community School by:

- ❖ Encouraging staff, parents and children to maximise the learning experience in order that all children reach their full potential.
- ❖ Providing clear procedures for involving parents relating to school attendance.
- ❖ This policy should also be read in conjunction with the school's Vision Statement and Ethos of the School as detailed below.

#### ***We are Willingdon***

We are a united, vibrant community which demonstrates personal excellence in all that we do. Learning at Willingdon transforms lives by igniting curiosity and expecting the very best from staff and students alike. We value opportunities, aiming for success today to prepare for challenges and opportunities tomorrow. We are respectful, honest and courteous to empower each other on our unique learning journeys. We look after ourselves and each other, and show empathy, respect and compassion to all people and our environment along the way. We encourage tolerance, resilience and reflection, which in turn allows everyone to make progress every lesson. We work together as a harmonious community to be the very best versions of ourselves.

#### ***This makes us Willingdon***

Date adopted by the Governing Body: 26<sup>th</sup> September 2024 – Amended March 2025

To be reviewed: September 2025

Staff Responsible: Nadene Townsend-Smith

Link Governor: Jane Branson, Chair of Governors

## ***Willingdon Community School Ethos***

At Willingdon Community School, we aim to develop Personal Excellence in all our students. Personal Excellence comprises five key values and behaviours:

### ***Ambition***

To strive to do your best on all occasions. Take on new challenges and challenge yourself to reach the highest possible standards and be personally successful.

### ***Respect***

To respect and value all members of our community, recognising and celebrating our differences. Respect ourselves, valuing what we can each bring to our community.

### ***Compassion***

Understand the needs of others and support those who sometimes need our help. Contribute to charitable work which supports those less well-off in the world.

### ***Courtesy***

Be well mannered in all situations, displaying the basic courtesies that we all value. Greet those you work with regularly; be particularly welcoming and polite to visitors and show appreciation for those who support and work closely with you.

### ***Honesty***

Always be honest, even when it may appear difficult. Be honest to yourself - know your strengths and your weaknesses.

## **Principles**

Regular school attendance is the most important factor in achievement at school and we are committed to helping every child achieve their full potential. Any absence from school disrupts a child's learning. Missing lessons damages a student's self-confidence and understanding. In addition, teachers who then have to slow down lessons to accommodate those who have missed previous sessions are not doing justice to the rest of the class who attended all the lessons.

We, at Willingdon Community School, regard regular attendance to be 96% or higher, this equates to 8 school days of absence over the academic year. Excellent attendance improves students' outcomes and allows each child to fulfil their potential. When students' attendance fall below this, valuable learning time is lost or interrupted.

Children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent.

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. 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.

Every half-day absence 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, preferably in writing.

## **Understanding Attendance**

**Present** – The student is on the school site at the time of registration.

**Approved Education Activity (AEA)** – The student is engaged in an approved, supervised activity off site for example, an educational visit, sporting activity or work experience.

**Authorised absence (C,M,I)** – Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a reason such as genuine illness or other unavoidable cause. This will include illness, medical appointments, bereavement or any other circumstances that the school deems appropriate. A request for medical evidence is made when a student falls below 90% attendance and is therefore classified as a Persistent Absentee or a student is off from school for 3 days or more in a week.

**Excluded (E)** – Suspended from school.

**Unauthorised absences (O)** are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no “leave” has been given. This includes:

- ❖ parents keeping children off school unnecessarily
- ❖ truancy
- ❖ absences which have never been properly explained

**It is not appropriate for the school to authorise absences for shopping, looking after other children, day trips etc. Leave may however, be granted in an emergency (e.g. bereavement) or for medical appointments which may be in school time. Even though the latter is authorised, it will still be counted as an absence.**

**School refusal (O)** – this is chronic non-attendance, usually where there are wider family, psychological or behavioural problems affecting the student’s ability to attend school. The school will use interventions to support such situations but this can lead to local authority involvement in more serious cases. We can only accept consultant letters to make onward referrals to ISEND Teaching and Learning provision. GP letters are insufficient for such purposes.

### **Persistent and Severe Absenteeism (PA or SA)**

The Government threshold for Persistent Absenteeism is 90% or lower. This includes all absence, whether as a result of genuine illness or for unauthorised reasons. The names of those on this figure or below are taken directly from our database by County. Students with less than 50% attendance are categorised as severely absent and will receive interventions from TASS (Team Around the School and Setting) / EHKW (Early-Help Key Worker)

### **Willingdon Community School Policy regarding Holidays in Term Time**

The DfE instructs schools to consider holidays in term time only in very exceptional circumstances. Almost all holidays taken during term time will be coded as unauthorised absences. There is no entitlement for parents to remove their child from school for a family holiday during term time, even in circumstances where the parents’ employers refuse to grant holidays outside of the school term. The school is the only agency which can authorise such a holiday.

Parents who wish to claim exceptional circumstances as a reason for taking holidays in term time should be given the school’s request form and return it to the Attendance Manager when possible at least 2 months before the holiday. A copy of our request form, together with a letter from the Headteacher explaining our policy, is available on the website.

Under new DfE guidance, please note the following:

- A limit of no more than 2 penalty notices will be issued to the same parent for the same pupil within a 3-year rolling period will apply from 19 August 2024.
- The first penalty notice issued to the parent for that pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days reducing to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- Where it is deemed appropriate to issue a second penalty notice to the same parent for the same pupil within 3 years of the first notice, the second notice is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
- A third penalty notice will not be issued within a 3-year period. Therefore, in cases where the threshold is met for a third (or subsequent) times within those 3 years, a penalty notice cannot be issued, and alternative action will be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

### **Attendance Responsibilities**

#### **Parent/Carers**

Parents have the prime responsibility for ensuring that their child regularly attends school.

#### **Parent/Carers are asked to:**

- Contact the school by 8.30am on each day of absence using the absence line 01323 483144 with an explanation and reason for absence or via your ARBOR account.  
You may also wish to email [studentabsence@willingdonschool.org.uk](mailto:studentabsence@willingdonschool.org.uk)
- Inform the school of an advanced or planned appointment that cannot be taken outside the school day.
- Refrain from requesting any authorised absence except under exceptional circumstances.

#### **Tutors will:**

- Encourage all students to have regular attendance by engaging in frequent reminders and sharing attendance data with their tutees.
- Have conversations with students regarding absences.
- Have direct correspondence with parents regarding the students' wellbeing and attendance if this falls below 96%.
- Keep an overview of your child's attendance.
- Liaise with the Head of Year regarding interventions and individual concerns.
- Inform students of the procedures regarding planned absence.

#### **Subject Teachers will:**

- Take an electronic register each lesson within 10 minutes of the start of the lesson.
- Ensure the statutory register is taken at the very start of lesson 1 and 4 and again lesson 5 for safeguarding issues following lunch time.
- Pass on any concerns about absentees from lessons using 'on call' and the Pastoral Support Leaders.

- Use Arbor to record any punctuality issues and pass any concerns to the tutor and HoY.
- Sanction poor punctuality to any lesson.
- If taking students off site, follow the protocol for recording attendance with the Attendance Manager and Pastoral Support Leaders.
- Inform the Attendance Manager by email and other staff of the students absent due to off-site activities using the Daily Bulletin.

**Pastoral Support Leaders will:**

- Contact parents regarding poor punctuality on the day this has occurred, follow up with conversations if the problem of poor punctuality persists.
- Track and monitor poor punctuality and inform Head of Year of the pattern of lateness.
- Student Support will sanction poor punctuality and then liaise with Pastoral Support Leaders: if a child has arrived on site and on time, but failed to attend Lesson 1 at 8:30am.

**Head of Year will:**

- Track and monitor attendance for their year group.
- Use weekly tutor meeting to liaise with tutors and highlight concerns that require action.
- Liaise and meet with the Deputy Headteacher where there are concerns, reporting fortnightly on their year group attendance and vulnerable groups.
- Act on information from staff concerning attendance or poor punctuality, sanctioning accordingly.
- Inform parents of any students where poor punctuality or regular attendance is not habitual and put intervention in place, referring to agencies as required.
- Use assemblies and the school reward system to promote regular attendance.
- Hold attendance meetings with parents.

**Attendance Manager will:**

- Track and monitor whole school attendance and punctuality, initiating whole school policies and systems as required. Track and monitor the attendance of vulnerable groups, passing such information to the relevant members of staff.
- Support Head of Year to lead their teams to foster regular attendance.
- Liaise with external agencies and TASS (Team Around School and Setting) to devise any necessary interventions for students with persistent absenteeism or at risk of long term absence.
- Contact parents on first day of absence and every day thereafter.
- Compile attendance data for Headteacher, Governing Body, HoY, Deputy Headteacher.
- Hold attendance meetings with Parents, HoY and Deputy Headteacher.
- Consider withdrawal from learning (holiday) applications.
- Consider exceptional leave requests based on students' prior levels of attendance.

**Deputy Headteacher will:**

- Track and monitor whole school attendance and punctuality, initiating whole school policies and systems as required. This will be achieved with the Senior Leadership Team and other members of the pastoral team.
- Track and monitor the attendance of vulnerable groups, passing such information the relevant members of staff.
- Support Head of Year to lead their teams to foster regular attendance.
- Liaise with Attendance Manager regarding whole school attendance.

**The Headteacher will:**

- Monitor the policy and ensure the policy is adhered to.
- Ensure that attendance data is presented to the governing body and shared regularly with staff.
- Set attendance targets as part of the School Improvement Plan.

**The Governing Body will:**

- Approve attendance policy.
- Receive reports from the Headteacher.
- Scrutinise the working of the policy in light of the attendance data presented.
- Support the implementation of the policy.

### **Attendance Procedures**

**Notifying the School of a Child's Absence**

- If a child is absent from school, parents are expected to notify the Attendance Manager in advance (if this is a planned absence) or contact the school by 8.30am on each day of absence using the absence line 01323 483144 with an explanation and reason for absence or via your EDULINK account.  
You may also wish to email [studentabsence@willingdonschool.org.uk](mailto:studentabsence@willingdonschool.org.uk)

If no such communication is received, the Attendance Manager will contact parents by phone or text to inform them that their child is absent from school and request the reason.

If the school does not receive an explanation for absence on the first day, an email of enquiry will be sent home. The absence will be unauthorised if no reason given.

The same procedure will be followed on each day of a child's absence and not just on the first day of absence, even if a valid reason is given. This is a precaution in case a child truants after having had an authorised absence for illness.

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Team Around School and Setting (TASS) and Educational Welfare Officer (EWO). The Practitioner will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, these Officers can use Legal Interventions on parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment.

The school will have the following rigorous and robust systems to ensure high levels of attendance:

- Daily monitoring of student absence with parent/carer by phone or email where we have not been informed of the absence;
- Daily monitoring of punctuality and lateness to school/lessons with follow up sanctions applied and parents notified on the day.
- Weekly monitoring and tracking of attendance to identify trends and initiate interventions to promote excellent attendance.

## **Punctuality**

Late arrival at school is recorded by the pastoral team for all students regardless of the reason. Parents have a legal obligation to ensure their child arrives for an 8:30am start to Lesson 1 and the registration period will close at 9am. Students arriving between 8:30am and 9.30am will be coded as Late (L). Any arrivals after this time will be unauthorised and coded as such (U), unless there is medical evidence or special circumstances to which the school have been notified (i.e. half a day).

If a student arrives at school after 8:30am, parents will be notified using our email/text or Arbor. They will receive a standard notification that their child has arrived late. They will also receive a same day break sanction and this will be logged on our behaviour management system. Continued issues with punctuality will accelerate the sanction and lead to a meeting with parents and the pastoral team leader. Late arrival can be authorised in cases of delay in the arrival of school transport or known appointments. The school reserves the right to adjust morning registration time for individuals, after discussion with TASS. Parents will be notified in writing in such cases.

Students arriving late must enter through the late gate. Students arriving late must ensure they have signed in with Student Support so we have an accurate record of students on site at all times. Head of Year apply sanctions for lateness.

## **Medical appointment during the school day**

Students who need to leave during the school day - parents must notify the Attendance Manager prior to appointment, Students must sign out at student support, parents will be contacted if the Attendance Manager is unaware of the appointment. We would encourage all appointments to be made out of school hours to avoid the negative impact this has on your child's learning. If this is unavoidable, we urge parents to refrain from using whole day unless absolutely necessary.

## **Tracking and Monitoring Attendance**

The pastoral team meet regularly with the Senior Deputy Headteacher responsible for attendance and Attendance Manager to discuss attendance and punctuality. Head of Year track the attendance of all students within their cohort and use the school's Attendance Protocol to ensure consistency between all students. The protocol is built around early intervention and constant communication with parents, in order to maximise and maintain excellent attendance.

**Stage 1** – Student attendance is below 95.5% or has an accumulation of: 6 sessions in Term One. 8 sessions in Term Two. 14 sessions in Terms Three +

Stage 1 letter to parents, HoY / Attendance Manager meeting with student

**Stage 2** – Student attendance is below 94% or has an accumulation of: 8 sessions in Term One, 12 sessions in Term Two, 16 Session in Term Three +

Meeting in school with parents, student, HoY and Attendance Manager. An APDR or support plan is agreed with targets set with HoY, Attendance Manager, Educational Welfare Officer or member of the SLT. PP students highlighted to EWO.

**Stage 3** – A student's attendance is below 92%.

A second meeting to be held with parents and student. Medical evidence is required for illness. Students will complete student voice. Attendance Support Plan / APDR reviewed Parents informed that a Fixed Penalty Notice can be issued for 10 unauthorised sessions in 10 weeks if attendance drops to 90% Educational Welfare Officer to hold meetings, house visits, telephone calls with parents of PP students.

**Stage 4** – Student attendance below 90%.

Students will be categorised as a Persistent Absentee if attendance is below 90% (PA). A referral will be made to TASS for EHKW Support. This will be followed by an attendance meeting with EHKW, parents, student and HoY. Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued for 10 unauthorised sessions in 10 school weeks following a stage 3 meeting. Meeting will also be contracted and if attendance does not improve parents could be prosecuted. EWO issue fines and prosecute if attendance does not improve.

### **Child Missing from Education (CME)**

If a child leaves school and is not enrolled at another school within the required period, a CME notification is made. This notification may be made at an earlier point if there are Safeguarding concerns.

### **Rewards and Incentives**

Excellent and regular attendance is acknowledged by the school in Tutor, assemblies and through our school rewards system. Students will receive recognition for achieving excellent attendance (above 95%) each term. Head of Year may also use school events and activity trips to incentivise attendance.

Please note there is no longer a study leave period in the run up to the final exam period. Year 11 remain on roll until the end of June and the school will publish the date at which the students are no longer required to attend every day. This date will be determined by the school in consultations with the LEA and neighbouring schools.

### **Reduced timetables and Flexible Schooling Policy**

**Reference - East Sussex County Council Guidance on School Attendance 2024-2025, East Sussex County Council, Flexible Schooling Policy.**

The school will follow the East Sussex Guidance on part time timetables and flexible schooling. Part time timetables and flexible schooling will be reviewed 6 weekly and require a plan and attendance meeting and both options are at the discretion of the Headteacher/Senior Leader for attendance. For reduced timetables linked to medical issues, the school will require medical evidence.

### **Those people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:**

Emily May - Headteacher  
Nadene Townsend-Smith - Senior Deputy Headteacher  
Attendance Manager  
Head of Year and Pastoral Support Leader

## Summary

The school has a legal duty to inform parents of their child's absence figures through our reporting system and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. School staff are committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

**HoY** = Head of Year

**PSL** = Pastoral Support Leader

**TASS** = Teaching Around School and Settings.

**EHKW** = Early Help Key Worker

**EWO** = Educational Welfare Officer

**SLT** = Senior Leadership Team

**PP** = Pupil Premium

**APDR** = Assess, Plan, Do, Review

**PA/SA** = Persistent Absentee/ Severely Absentee

**Appendix 1 - Attendance procedures** (The intervention thresholds below are guidelines - every case should be monitored on an individual basis)

Regular attendance = 96%

Reward points allocated.

(Form Tutor conversation with student if attendance drops to 96% and nudge letter sent to parents)



Tutors will be sent fortnightly attendance data for discussions with students - Logged on school system



**Stage 1**

Attendance falls to 95.5% or under – Letter sent to parent. HoY/Attendance Manager meeting with student.



**Stage 2**

Attendance falls below 94% - Meeting with parents/student/Head of Year and Welfare Officer. ADPR or support plan agreed and targets set. Group incentives applied as required.



**Stage 3**

No improvement or falls to 92% or below. A second meeting to be held, medical evidence required. Plan reviewed and Educational Welfare Officer to hold meetings. Pupil voice and PNP (Pastoral Needs Plan) completed with termly reviews.



**Stage 4**

90% or below. Student categorised as Persistent Absentee if attendance falls below 90%. Review of PNP – SLT involvement. Referral made to TASS, Educational Welfare Officer to issue fines if attendance does not improve. If attendance falls below 80% - TASS intervention and parent contract / ADPR applied. Students below 50% are categorised as S.A. and referred to EHK.

<b><u>Attendance Monitoring and Intervention Procedures</u></b>	
<b>Action</b>	<b>Person Responsible</b>
<b>Punctuality</b>	
<b>Students late due to buses.</b> Teachers will need to unlock their register and amend the mark to present not late.	Teacher to sign students in
<b>Late to lesson 1 but not on late gate.</b> Teachers will need to log on ARBOR minutes late to lesson. By end of the week the minutes are totalled up and student is kept for a afterschool detention.	Log on ARBOR Behaviour point issued Teachers
<b>Late gate.</b> Students late after 8:30am will be identified on the late gate, the list will be handed to Student Support and at 9am they will forward any amendments. They will need to ensure these late marks are amended to show they are late (L), but in doing this they will at least know that they have arrived to school before making the calls home to parents for absences. Student Support use ARBOR to inform parents on the day this happens. This will be sanctioned by the Attendance Manager as a break detention. Student Support will need to provide an audit on lates on a Friday. Repeated lates should be transferred to an after-school detention if it's more than 3 in one week for 1 hour. Repeated late issues should then be addressed by the Pastoral Team and contact made with parent and a telephone or meeting held to address.	Communication with Attendance Manager PSL/HoY Student Support
<b><u>Late after Close of registration</u></b>  Parents will be informed via ARBOR by Student Support. If poor punctuality persists, parents are called for a meeting with Pastoral Team and could be liable for a fixed penalty notice issued by Attendance Manager/ EWO. For students arriving after 9.30am, they will receive a U code unless they have medical evidence to support they had a medical appointment in which case they will have an M code. Student Support will deal with students signing in and out after 9am.	Attendance Manager PSL/HoY  Student Support
Punctuality audited during attendance meetings.	Assistant Headteacher/ HoY/ Attendance Manager/ EWO
Any unexplained first day of absence will be followed up via contact with parents via phone or email. Until contact is made, absence will remain as an 'N' code. Unauthorised and unexplained. Further attempts will be made to ascertain reasons for absence if parents fail to respond to the initial contact.	Attendance Manager/ PSL

Action	Person Responsible
<b>Attendance</b>	
A RAG rated spread sheet will be updated weekly to the HoYs to complete feedback for attendance meeting fortnightly.	Attendance Manager/ HoY
HoY will distribute the RAG spread sheet to form tutors for action where tutor intervention is required.	HoY
Good attendance at Willingdon Community School is 96% and above. Student are required to be in school for 190 days of the year, leaving 175 days for holidays.	
<b>Student Attendance 96%</b>  Form tutors will speak to students in school to discuss any issues or problems to ascertain how school can help to improve their attendance. A letter sent informing them of expectations regarding regular attendance. This is a nudge letter only.	Tutor
<b>Student attendance below 95.5% STAGE 1</b>  Attendance falls to 95.9% or under – Letter sent to parent. HoY/ Attendance Manager meeting with student.	Attendance Manager/ HoY/PSL
<b>Student Attendance below 94% STAGE 2</b>  A meeting will be held with the parent/student/HoY and Attendance Manager and an APDR or support plan will be agreed with targets set with HoY, Attendance Manager, Educational Welfare Officer or member of the SLT. PP students highlighted to Educational Welfare Officer.	Attendance Manager/ HoY/EWO/SLT
<b>Student Attendance below 92% STAGE 3</b>  A second meeting will be held with parent/student. Medical evidence will be required for illness and students will complete a student voice. APDR/support plan will be reviewed. Parents informed that a Fixed Penalty Notice can be issued for 10 unauthorised sessions in 10 weeks if attendance drops to 90%. The Educational Welfare Officer to hold meetings, house visits, telephone calls with parents of PP students.	Attendance Manager/ HoY/EWO/SLT
<b>Student Attendance below 90% STAGE 4</b>  Students will be categorised as a Persistent Absentee if attendance is below 90% (PA). A referral will be made to TASS (Team Around the School Setting). This will be followed by an attendance meeting with TASS, parent/student and HoY. A Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued for 10 unauthorised sessions in 10 weeks following a stage 3 meeting. The meeting will also be contracted and if attendance does not improve, parents could be prosecuted. The Educational Welfare Officer will issue fines if attendance does not improve.	Attendance Manager/ HoY/TASS/EWO
<b>Attendance report – 2 weekly</b>  HoYs will complete a review of attendance before the meeting. They will identify students at each level of intervention, punctuality and the attendance of vulnerable groups.	Attendance Manager/ HoY/Deputy Headteacher