



# Willingdon

## COMMUNITY SCHOOL

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#### 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.

#### 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 of absence days 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.

Date adopted by the Governing Body: 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2018

To be reviewed: March 2020

Staff Responsible: Nadene Townsend-Smith

Link Governor: Clive Hale

## **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 91% attendance and is therefore classified as a Persistent Absentee.

**Excluded** – Excluded from school.

**Unauthorised absences (U)** 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 before or during the school day
- ❖ absences which have never been properly explained
- ❖ children who arrive at school too late to get a mark

**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 must 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 Absenteeism**

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 below 91% will receive notification from the Attendance Officer as a preventative measure.

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

The DfES instructs schools to consider authorising 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 Officer at least fourteen days before the holiday. A copy of our request form, together with a letter from the Headteacher explaining our policy is available on the website.

## 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 9am on each day of absence using the absence line 01323 483144 with an explanation, leaving a message if required. They may also email [studentabsence@willingdonschool.org.uk](mailto:studentabsence@willingdonschool.org.uk) or by text to 01323 700027.
- Inform the school of an advanced or planned appointments that cannot be taken outside the school day.
- Refrain from requesting any authorised absence except under exceptional circumstances.

#### **Tutors will:**

- Take the register at 8:30am in lesson 1.
- 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 Director of Student Progress regarding interventions and individual concerns.
- Inform students of the procedures regarding planned absence.
- Sanction poor punctuality: if a child has arrived on site and on time, but failed to attend lesson 1 at 8:30am.

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

- Take an electronic register each lesson within 10 minutes.
- Ensure the statutory register is taken at the very start of lesson 5 and again lesson 6 for safeguarding issues following lunch time.
- Pass on any concerns about absentees from lessons using 'on call' and the pastoral support team.
- Use SIMS to record any punctuality issues and pass any concerns to the tutor.
- Sanction poor punctuality to any lesson.
- If taking students off site, follow the protocol for recording attendance with the Attendance Officer and pastoral leaders.
- Inform the Attendance Officer by email and other staff of the students absent due to off-site activities using the Daily Bulletin.

#### **Pastoral Support Assistants will:**

- Compile attendance data and inform the Attendance Officer of all known absences.
- Contact home on the first and each day of absence where the reason for the absence is unknown. A 'N' code will be issued until the reason has been submitted.
- 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 Directors of Student Progress of the pattern of lateness.

#### **Directors of Student Progress 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 Assistant 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.

**Assistant 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 to the relevant members of staff.
- Support Directors of Student Progress to lead their teams to foster regular attendance.
- Liaise with external agencies to devise any necessary interventions for students with persistent absenteeism or at risk of long term absence.

**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.
- Consider exceptional leave requests based on students' prior levels of attendance.

**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 officer in advance (if this is a planned absence) or as soon as possible on the day of absence, preferably before 9am. This can take the form of a telephone call, text or email to the Attendance Officer. The absence line is 01323483144 .They may also email [studentabsence@willingdonschool.org.uk](mailto:studentabsence@willingdonschool.org.uk) or text 01323 700027.

If no such communication is received, the Attendance Officer or the Pastoral Support Officer 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, a letter of enquiry will be sent home. If an explanation is still outstanding after five days the absence will be coded as unauthorised.

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 Education Support, Behaviour & Attendance Service (ESBAS). 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. Financial penalties and a custodial sentence can be imposed.

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 the end of this lesson. Students arriving between 8:30am and the end of lesson 1 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 SchoolComms. They will receive a standard notification that their child has arrived late. 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 ESBAS. Parents will be notified in writing in such cases.

Student arriving after 8:30am must enter through the school's reception and ensure they have signed in to ensure we have an accurate record of students on site at all times. Directors of Student Progress apply sanctions for lateness.

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

Students who need to leave during the school day require a letter from home and will need to have this on them when they sign out at Reception. Where possible, students are expected to return to school and sign back in at Reception. 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 the whole day unless absolutely necessary.

## **Tracking and Monitoring Attendance**

The pastoral team meet regularly with the Assistant Headteacher responsible for attendance and Attendance Officer to discuss attendance and punctuality. Directors of Student Progress 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 – A student has dropped below 96% and a letter of notification will be received by parents from the school. This is only a 'nudge' letter to inform parents where their child's attendance is at.

Stage 2 – A student's attendance falls below 93%. A second letter of notification will be received by parents and parents will be contacted by phone and invited to a meeting to complete an Attendance Support Plan (ASP). This is to prevent a downward trend and often proves useful in finding resolutions to improve attendance by sharing concerns with all parties. If parents fail to attend this meeting it will take place with the child regardless.

Stage 3 – A student's attendance is below 91%. The parents will receive a notification to attend a meeting to sign a contract which will prevent their child featuring as a persistent absenteeism. Your child is now at risk of being regarded as persistent absentee and you will be required to provide medical evidence.

Stage 4 – Your child will be referred to ESBAS if they have received 10 'Unauthorised' absences after Stage 3 in less than 6 weeks. This could subsequently lead to Legal Interventions.

## **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 lesson 1, assemblies and through our school rewards system. Students will receive recognition for 100% attendance. Directors of Student Progress may also use school events and activity trips to incentivise attendance.

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

Emily Beer – Headteacher

Nadene Townsend-Smith – Assistant Headteacher

Janie Jellings - Attendance Officer

Directors of Student Progress and Pastoral Support Assistant.

## **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.