

WINTON PRIMARY SCHOOL



Attendance Policy and Procedures

1. Introduction and Policy Statement

At Winton Primary School we want pupils to enjoy their learning, experience success and realise their full potential. This policy reflects that, recognising that regular attendance has a positive impact on the motivation, progress and attainment of our pupils. We value the efforts that parents and children make to attend school regularly.

Any absence has an affect on a child's education and regular absence will have a serious detriment to a pupil's learning. The Department for Education (DfE) defines persistent absence as missing 10% or more of their education in a year, for any reason.

2. Aims

Winton Primary aims to promote good attendance and to ensure every pupil has access to a full-time education. We will take every opportunity to act early to address a pattern of absence.

This policy sets out the school position and procedures relating to attendance. It also makes clear what those with parental responsibility for a child (referred to as parents throughout this policy) must do when reporting or managing their child's absence from school.

Pupils need to develop regular attendance habits from an early age in order to set a pattern for future success in school and beyond. As a result, the school encourages parents of Reception children, who are not yet of compulsory school age, to attend every available session. If the child cannot attend school the parent should inform the school on the first day of absence. If the school is concerned about a child's attendance for any reason, we will contact the parent in the first instance.

Winton Primary supports parents to fulfil their legal duty to ensure their children attend regularly and will support both punctuality and attendance.

We want our pupils to attend daily unless they are not well enough to do so. It is the school belief that children who attend regularly are more likely to feel settled in school, maintain friendships, keep up with their learning and achieve their full educational potential. We want our pupils to enjoy school and grow up to be resilient, confident citizens and lifelong learners. Regular attendance and punctuality are essential in the workplace and children who attend school on time, regularly will be better prepared for the rest of their life and the challenges of the workplace. Pupils should only miss school if they are too unwell to attend.

If an absence is not authorised by the school a pupil's attendance is deemed irregular as regular attendance is deemed to be in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school.

Winton Primary will do all it can to encourage pupils to attend. Where this is not possible due to medical needs we will make the best provision we can for any pupil who needs additional support or is prevented from attending by a medical condition. The latest DfE guidance will be used in such circumstances.

We believe that one of the most important factors in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children, and to foster positive and mutually respectful relationships with parents.

By promoting good attendance and punctuality we aim to:

- Make good attendance and punctuality a priority for all those involved in the school community
- Raise our pupils' awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- Provide support, advice and guidelines to parents, pupils and staff
- Work in partnership with parents
- Celebrate and reward good attendance and punctuality

Impact of non-attendance

Sometimes a child's attendance percentage is looked at and appears good because the percentage figure seems high. The table overleaf makes it clear what lies underneath the figure.

Winton Primary School considers good attendance to be 96% or higher. At 90% the DfE classifies a pupil as persistently absent.

Attendance	Days lost	Lessons missed	If maintained over primary years
96%	8	40	56 days (11 weeks, approximately a term)
93%	13	65	91 days (18 weeks, approximately a term and a half or half a school year)
90% (persistently absent)	19 (almost 4 weeks)	95	133 days (26 weeks, over two terms or 2/3rds of a school year)
85%	29 days (almost 6 weeks or half a term)	145	203 days (40 school weeks – more than a school year missed).
80%	38 days (almost 8 weeks)	190	266 days (53 school weeks)

Impact of Lateness

Punctuality is an important life skill required for success in the workplace in later life, the bedrock for this is set whilst children are in education. When a child arrives at school late this often causes them anxiety. They can miss important events or teaching, including introduction or explanation of new learning. Children often feel embarrassed at entering late and are anxious if they don't understand what to do in a lesson. The table below illustrates the cumulative impact that repeated lateness can have.

Minutes late per day	No of days lost in a year	Lessons missed
5 mins	3 days	15 lessons
10 mins	6 days	30 lessons
15 mins	9 days	45 lessons

Registers, Lateness and unauthorised Lateness:

School starts at 8.50am and the registers are taken at this time and the school gates are closed. Children arriving after 8.50am will need to report to the office to be signed in late (authorised), children who arrive after 9.20am will have their lateness recorded as an **unauthorised absence** except for visits to the doctor or dentist, or a similar authorised event.

We ask all parents to notify the school as soon as possible to report the reason for their child's absence so that this can be recorded electronically. Authorised absences include sickness, visit to the doctor, dentist or hospital, an agreed educational visit, and in other exceptional circumstances for which the Headteacher may give permission. Wherever possible we ask that appointments are made out of school time.

Where medical absences become a frequent occurrence there may be a need to ask for medical evidence, particularly if the absences are prolonged. We may also ask, in partnership with parents, for involvement from health professionals so there is a shared understanding of health needs and at times a health care plan may need to be put in place.

Leave of Absence in exceptional circumstances:

Headteachers may only grant leave of absence for exceptional circumstances, the following examples of such exceptional circumstances are a guide for Headteachers when considering leave of absence requests. Please email the school office to request a leave of absence giving as much information and supporting documentation as you can to allow a decision to be made.

Examples of any exceptional circumstances where leave may be granted during term time:

- Funeral of parent, grandparent or sibling – Headteachers are expected to use their discretion having heard from parents about travel and funeral arrangements and considering the distance to be travelled (prolonged absence cannot be authorised e.g. 5 days or more).
- Sudden loss of housing through eviction or domestic violence - up to a maximum of 3 days.
- Serious illness of a close relative – only if Headteacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional

- Out of school programmes such as music, arts or sport operating at a high standard of achievement and agreed by the LA – as appropriate. BCP Performance Licensing can advise parents on individual circumstances if required.
- Religious observance – The Education Act 1996 S444 (3) (c), states “on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which his/her parent belongs”.
- This would include the Islamic observance of Eid, as well as religious observance days of Orthodox Christian, Jewish or other religions. Headteachers may specify that only one day will be authorised at a time. The Headteacher will use local guidance e.g. SACRE in relation to authorising such requests as these guidelines are drawn up in conjunction with local religious leaders.
- Weddings of parents and siblings – weddings can be arranged at weekends or during school holidays; however we acknowledge that there are times when the dates are dependent on other factors, such as the needs of the couple getting married. Leave will only be authorised for this purpose when the Headteacher is satisfied that there is a persuasive reason for holding the wedding during term time.

Examples of circumstances NOT considered as exceptional

- Holidays abroad for the purpose of visiting a sick relative.
- Travel abroad by parents (including religious pilgrimage e.g. Hajj). Such requests cannot be approved where children will be away from school for significant periods of time (at least 5 days). Travelling with parents is not considered an exceptional circumstance for children to be absent from school.
- Holidays taken in term time due to lower cost/parental work commitments.

Fixed Penalty Notices:

The governing body have signed up to the BCP Council Penalty Notice Code of Conduct produced by the Local Authority. The Headteacher will request a Fixed Penalty Notice for persistent unauthorised absence or unauthorised holidays taken during term time and any other absence defined in the code as qualifying for a Penalty Notice.

Under existing legislation, parents/carers commit an offence if a child fails to attend regularly and the absences are categorised as unauthorised (the school viewing reasons provided as unacceptable; or no explanations received; or 'truancy').

Depending on circumstances such cases may result in prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. However, legislation allows the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice under Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 to each parent/carer with responsibility for a child in respect of the offence.

- A Penalty Notice is seen as a simpler sanction to focus parents on their responsibilities and does not require an appearance in Court. Payment of a Penalty Notice offers a person the opportunity of discharging any liability to conviction of the offence under section 444(1) to which the notice relates.
- A Penalty Notice under Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act. If a Penalty Notice is issued, the fine for each parent/carer for each child, would be £60 if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid within 28 days.
- Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 allows the Authority to issue a Penalty Notice under Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 to each parent/carer with responsibility in respect of the offence. A penalty notice is a notice offering a person the opportunity of discharging any liability to conviction for the offence under section 444(1) to which the notice relates by payment of a penalty in accordance with the notice. Where a person is given a penalty notice he/she cannot be convicted of the offence to which the notice relates if he/she pays the penalty notice in accordance with the notice.

Prosecution

In cases where there is persistent failure to secure good attendance and offers of support have been unsuccessful in creating change, we may refer to the use of legal prosecution under section 444 of The Education Act 1996 and refer to BCP council to progress to prosecution. Wherever possible, we hope to avoid such action.

Following up Absences

The school has a safeguarding duty to monitor children's absences as well as a duty to work with parents to ensure regular school attendance. On the first day of absence contact is made, via ParentMail, with the parent/carer of the child to find out why the child is absent. This is both to establish the reason for absence as well as the safety of the child. We ask that parents work with us to notify us of the reason for absence as quickly as possible and on the first day of absence. On the third day of absence we will call pupil contacts until we are able to speak to someone or get a reason for absence. If we are still not able to get a reason for absence we may carry out home visits or other measures to ensure the child is safe and to understand why they are not at school.

Our Independent Social Worker (ISW) works with the school to monitor attendance. In line with Local Authority guidelines we operate a system of "warning" letters regarding persistent absence i.e. letters 1 and 2 followed by involvement with the ISW if efforts are not successful and concerns persist. Parents who have difficulties in getting their children to school should speak to the Headteacher about the matter.

If your child is absent either side of a school holiday and we are unable to reach you, our parent support worker may complete a home visit. We also require medical evidence to support absences either side of a school break and without this the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Guidance for Parents & Carers

To work in partnership on attendance we ask families to:

- 1) In the case of illness notify us by ParentMail or telephone on the first day and each subsequent day.
- 2) Try to make medical appointments or other appointments outside of school hours wherever possible.
- 3) Provide evidence of essential medical appointments by ParentMail or email to the school office.
- 4) Avoid taking leave of absence in term time if possible.

- 5) If leave of absence is taken in term time please request or notify the school in advance, providing as much detail and supporting documentation as possible. Please understand that such leave is likely to be recorded as unauthorised and may incur a fine. However, it is better that we know that a child is safe rather than having to follow our Child Missing Education procedures.

- 6) Should you have an attendance concern about your child please make an appointment to speak to Mr Tarchetti, Headteacher who leads on attendance.

Support for Poor School Attendance (other than unauthorised term time leave)

We encourage parents to share concerns around attendance or any difficulty a pupil may be having e.g. a reluctance to attend school. If a child is reluctant to attend school this needs to be shared with school and for school and family to work together to address the issue. Allowing absence in these circumstances can give the child the message that attendance at school is not important and make the matter worse. Whilst school will communicate attendance concerns to parents it is also important for parents to raise concerns in a timely way with school. Parents can book an appointment to discuss concerns with Mr Tarchetti, or a senior member of staff, by contacting the school office.

As part of our support to families, or in response to continued poor attendance, we may ask parents to meet the Headteacher, work with our Parent Support Worker or work with our Independent Social Worker (ISW). In some cases, these meetings may result in a formal action plan being produced which is called a Parenting Contract or other support being offered to the family. Should these measures not be successful then the case may be referred to BCP council for legal sanctions. In these circumstances the school will evidence that parents were warned of the risk of sanctions in a warning letter. The school will only take these measures as a last resort or in cases where parents have refused to engage with the support offered.

Reporting Attendance and Absence

Attendance and absence will be recorded in the Headteacher's reports to the Governing Body each term. All parents will be given their child's record of attendance in the school report which they will receive each summer. Additionally, attendance will be reported of all school age children at the beginning of each term.

Transferring school/Leaving the country and Children Missing Education (CME)

If families move away from the area, or wish to transfer their child to another school, the Headteacher must be informed in writing and this must include the child's forwarding address details and school information (including those that move out of the UK). There is a leaver form that must be completed fully prior to a leaving date, please contact the office for a copy of this form. Children cannot be removed from the school roll until we have been notified by another school that a place has been taken up. Children who stop attending and who cannot be traced cannot be removed from the school roll, they are referred as CME to the Local Authority where further checks are undertaken in line with their CME policy.

Reviewed and updated September 2022