

WILLOW GROVE PRIMARY SCHOOL



Attendance & Punctuality Policy 2026-2027

Author: Wigan Local
Authority

Date:
September 2026

Reviewed By:
Lindsay Glover

Next date to be reviewed:
August 2027

Contact Details

The name and contact details of the senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in our school is:

Miss L. Glover (Headteacher and Attendance Champion)

Contact Details 01942 727717 / headteacher@admin.willowgrove.wigan.sch.uk

The name and contact details of the school staff member pupils and parents should contact about attendance on a day-to-day basis is:

Mrs K. Green

Contact Details 01942 727717 / enquiries@admin.willowgrove.wigan.sch.uk

The name and contact details of the school staff member pupils and parents should contact for more individual support with the Pastoral Care Lead who will inform an appropriate member of staff who will contact you.

Mrs S. Latham (Pastoral Care Lead and Attendance Champion)

Contact Details 01942 727717 / or via enquiries@admin.willowgrove.wigan.sch.uk

We also work in partnership with Mr S. Wetton, a Local Authority Attendance Support Officer. He looks at our attendance data and works with school and our families to support improved attendance. Mr Wetton may carry out home visits to safeguard our children, as well as to support a return to school.

We are committed to ensuring that systems and processes are in place regarding promoting attendance and would encourage parents to make contact with school as soon as possible if they have any concerns about their child.



Introduction and Aim

Willow Grove Primary School recognises the importance of good attendance and the impact it has on children's progress, attainment, enjoyment of learning and relationships within school. Good attendance helps children to realise their potential and ensures they are motivated, confident, and able to enjoy a diverse range of curricular opportunities and experiences. Children must attend school every day during term time unless an exceptional circumstance applies.

Our school policy and prospectus promote good attendance, which is recognised and rewarded as an achievement. The school monitors attendance to ensure quick and early intervention if a problem is identified. We recognise that whole school preventative and proactive approaches are key to promoting the children's wellbeing and attendance.

Our policy is accessible to leaders, staff, pupils, and parents, and is published on our school website. It will be sent to parents with any initial information when pupils join the school, and they will be reminded of it at the beginning of each school year. Parents/Carers will be informed if any updates are made to this policy.

The school recognises that barriers to attendance evolve quickly and as such this policy will be reviewed and updated as necessary.

This Policy is based on the premise of equal opportunities for all and is also in line with our school values,

“Be Safe, Be Kind, Be Positive”

Legal Duty

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at school or by education otherwise than at school.

Regular and punctual attendance at school is essential to enable children to maximise their educational attainment, opportunities, and further development.

Relevant Legislation and Legal Background:

- Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that ‘The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise’.
- Section 444 (1) of the Education Act 1996 states that ‘if a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school his parent is guilty of an offence’.

- Section 576 Education Act 1996 stipulates that for the purposes of Education Law, parent includes:
 - All biological parents, whether they are married or not.
 - Any person who, although not a biological parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person - this could be an adoptive parent, a step-parent, guardian or other relative. Any person who, although not a biological parent and does not have parental responsibility, has care of a child or young person. This could be one parent, both parents and/or carers.

School commitment

Everyone in school is committed to promoting the importance of good attendance and punctuality. We will support pupils and parents to achieve good attendance and punctuality, and we will work closely with parents where absence is a cause for concern.

Willow Grove School strives for 100% attendance for all pupils. The whole school attendance target is 94%.

We are committed to promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which all pupils feel safe, secure, and valued. We will ensure that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.

We will work with all pupils and their parents to maximise attendance and where necessary, we will put in place additional support and adjustments. If required we will engage additional support from wider services and external partners, making timely referrals.

Recording attendance

We will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register. We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. During both the first and second session we will record whether each pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved educational activity.
- Absent; or
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

The school will follow up any absences to:

- Ascertain the reason for absence.
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not.

- Identify the correct code to use before entering it on to the school's electronic register, or management information system as a priority and returned to the school office in a timely manner. This is used to download data to the School Census.
- Consider early identification, assessment, intervention, and support processes that may need to be implemented.

The register is marked using the codes as advised by the Department for Education (DfE) 'Working together to improve School Attendance Guidance' (for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities), for further information, please visit - [Working together to improve school attendance](https://publishing.service.gov.uk) (applies from 19 August 2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Procedure

Children are expected to attend school regularly, unless there is good reason for absence. There are two types of absence:

- Authorised (where the school approves a pupil absence)
- Unauthorised (where school will not approve the absence)

The school has a duty to safeguard all pupils. If a child is absent, the parents/carers must inform the school on the first day of absence and each following day of absence, stating the reason.

Parents/Carers should phone school on the morning of the first day of absence and each following day of absence unless it has been agreed by school that this is not necessary if the absence is or likely to be long term.

Parents should call Mrs K. Green who is responsible for the day-to-day monitoring of attendance and will work with the pastoral team and wider staff to support attendance and share attendance data and reasons for absence.

In the event a child is absent from school and the parent/carer has not notified the school of the absence, the school office will contact home as soon as possible. If no contact is established or the reason for absence is not accepted, the absence will be deemed unauthorised. Should contact be established later with parent and a reason for absence is provided, the school may amend this to authorised if they are satisfied with the reason given.

Communication between Parents/Carers and School

Communication between parents/carers and the school is extremely important as this enables us to ensure that children are supported and feel settled in school. If your child is absent, you must inform the school immediately in line with the procedure as outlined above.

As a school we recognise that building respectful relationships with families and working in collaboration is essential to ensuring the best outcomes for children/young people.

We require all parents to actively support the work of the school, including promoting attendance and engagement. We are committed to ensuring that systems and processes are in place with regards to promoting attendance and would encourage parents to make contact if they have concerns about their child.

In the event there is a persistent lack of engagement by parents, we may seek to secure engagement and school attendance through formal legal procedures.

Absence monitoring

School robustly monitors and analyses attendance data to promptly identify and address possible concerns. This allows for early interventions to support the child/family's underlying needs.

This monitoring will include:

- Weekly attendance code analysis
- Weekly analysis of types of persistent absence
- Specific cohort and group monitoring – particularly for vulnerable groups i.e. children with a social worker
- Regular monitoring of attendance with the attendance officer and attendance champions
- Governor oversight of attendance data, at least termly.

Absence monitoring allows the school to use data to identify individuals who need support and to work towards reducing persistent and severe absence. In doing so we will consider the individual needs of pupils and their families who have specific barriers to attendance.

Early Identification and Intervention: assess, plan, do, review.

Every pupil has a right to a full-time education and Willow Grove Primary School sets high attendance expectations for all pupils. Willow Grove Primary School will consider the individual needs of pupils and their families who have specific barriers to attendance.

For any child / young person who is absent from school, it is essential to fully understand the reasons for this so that targeted, evidence-based interventions and support can be put into place. All staff have a part to play in promoting attendance. We recognise the importance of ensuring that key members of staff from across the school, including class teachers, attendance, pastoral and SEND staff work in collaboration to consider and identify the holistic needs of the child/young person and to overcome barriers to attendance.

In accordance with the principles of early intervention, a graduated approach of assess, plan, do and review will be followed, utilising a range of school-based resources, evidence-based interventions and seeking advice and support from external services at an appropriate stage, where required.

Appropriate assessments will be important to help understand the underlying reasons that may be contributing to attendance difficulties. This may be an assessment that focuses on the individual child's needs and will include the views of the child/young person as well as parents/carers and identify strengths (what is working well) and needs (what is working less well).

Assessments undertaken may identify that a child/young person is experiencing underlying emotional based needs that are contributing to non-attendance. As a school we will access appropriate guidance developed by Wigan Local Authority in respect of this: Emotionally Based School Attendance – best practice tool. This is a whole school framework with a graduated approach to support the early identification and intervention of children/young people who may struggle to cope in school/attend school.

Information from assessments will inform a SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Targets) action plan with focused targets developed in partnership with families, and other services as appropriate.

For example, Start Well and Social Care may have a part to play in the delivery of support and intervention to promote engagement and attendance. SMART plans should be personalised to effectively meet a child / young person's needs and improve attendance and wellbeing outcomes.

Regular reviews of support and attendance plans are essential to monitor the impact of interventions and to adjust these accordingly. If, despite targeted support and intervention, attendance and wellbeing concerns persist, we may seek further advice and support from external services including mental health services, specialist teaching and education services.

Medical absence

Absence due to sickness must be reported to the school by phone on the first day of absence. The school must be kept informed during longer periods of absence. School will contact parents during the first day if no satisfactory reason for absence has been received.

It is usually appropriate for parents and carers to send their children to school with mild respiratory illnesses. This would include general cold symptoms: a minor cough, runny nose, or sore throat. However, children should not be sent to school if they have a temperature of 38°C or above. Please read this link for further information [Is my child too ill for school? - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

If a medical absence is likely to be ongoing or long term, we will offer support in accordance with the school's and Local Authority's policies relating to children with health needs. As a school we need to plan how children can access education during periods of long-term absence and how and when the child will return to school. School will make reasonable adjustments for pupils where necessary and appropriate.

To ensure we have the appropriate pathway of support we will follow our 'Early identification' model and implement an individual plan tailored to a child's medical needs to enable access to suitable education.

As a school we will adhere to the Local Authority policy Education of pupils with medical needs (wigan.gov.uk) This policy includes a graduated response, supporting inclusive practice across all settings to ensure children's continued links to their education provider when their health needs may impact their access to education.

Absences due to Medical Appointments

We request that where possible, any dental, GP and other medical appointments are made outside of school time. If it is imperative that such an appointment must be arranged to take place in school time, we request that details of the same are provided to us as soon as possible.

Lateness and punctuality

School begins from 8.50am when our pupils begin to arrive in taxis or parent/carer drop offs, all pupils are expected to be in school for registration.

- Register taken at 9.00am
- Registers close at 9.30am

Any child who arrives after the gates are closed must enter the school by the main entrance and report to the school reception to sign in.

- If pupils are not in class when the register is taken, they will be coded as 'L'.
- If pupils arrive after registers close, they will be coded as 'U'.

Children who are consistently late for school are disrupting not only their own education, but also that of other children. Where persistent lateness gives cause for concern, parents/carers will be invited to a meeting to resolve the issues. If there is no improvement following this meeting, further action will be taken which may include referral to external agencies.

You may approach the school at any time for support and advice if you are having difficulty getting your child to school on time or maintaining regular attendance.

Unauthorised absence

An absence may be coded as 'unauthorised' if:

- no reason for absence has been given.
- reason for absence is deemed insufficient by School.
- a request for a holiday in term time has been unauthorised.

- a pupil arrives at school after registration has closed at 9.30am

Parents/carers should be aware that Willow Grove Primary School may contact the Local Authority if a pupil has 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks with a view to issuing an Education Penalty Notice or other legal action. The Education Penalty Notice is issued individually to each parent/carer who fails to ensure their child's regular attendance at school. The penalty is £80 per parent/carer per child if paid within 21 days rising to £160 if paid within 28 days. Non-payment of the Fixed Penalty Notice may result in prosecution in the Magistrates court.

[Consequences of not attending school \(wigan.gov.uk\)](http://wigan.gov.uk)

Application for holiday in term time

A Head Teacher may not grant any holiday during term time unless it is deemed that there are exceptional circumstances.

The Head Teacher will determine what constitutes an exceptional circumstance on an individual basis. If parents/carers need to request a holiday in term time, they must complete the relevant form available from the school office. It should be noted that if any application is declined and absence occurs of a consecutive 5 or more unauthorised days, then school may apply to the Local Authority for an Education Penalty Notice to be issued to each parent/carer.

The following will not be deemed to be exceptional circumstances:

- Family holiday
- Availability of less expensive holiday
- Availability of holiday accommodation
- Parent/carer's working commitments
- Holiday pre-booked by another family member

A child's absence during term time seriously disrupts their continuity of learning. Not only do they miss the teaching on the days they are away but are less prepared for the lessons building on that teaching when they return to school. There is a consequent risk of under achievement, which we must seek to avoid.

Religious observance

We recognise that some pupils may need to participate in days of religious observance. Where a day of religious observance:

- falls during school time and;
- has been exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil belongs

We ask that parents/carers notify Willow Grove Primary School in writing in advance where

absence is required due to a religious observance.

Enforced school closure

If Willow Grove Primary School is forced to close for a period, we have the facility to operate an online virtual school. In such circumstances, children are expected to engage with ALL activities when work is set.

Procedures for online learning will be sent to parents as and when required. We will communicate this via DoJo.

Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually as a minimum by the Headteacher. At each review, the policy will be approved by the Governing board.

In the occurrence of an unprecedented situation, temporary changes of this attendance policy may be implemented. The changes may be influenced by scientific guidance, government policy or school risk assessments which may take one of many forms. The plan for school attendance will be shared with parents when required. This will be communicated via social media, letters and emails or other methods that will be deemed appropriate at the time.

Links with other policies

This policy links to the following school policies:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection policy
- Relationships Policy

Other guidance/policies:

- Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk)
- Children missing education (wigan.gov.uk)
- Consequences of not attending school (wigan.gov.uk)

Please be aware, if your child is absent from school and we have safeguarding concerns, we will carry out a home visit or contact the police to support us with a welfare check.

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