

William Austin Infant School

Attendance Policy

January 2026

SECTION 1 – POLICY

The law states that a pupil is required to attend regularly at the school where he, or she, is a registered pupil.

Introduction

Regular attendance at school is essential to ensure uninterrupted progress and to enable children to extend their potential. The attendance pattern for all children is monitored weekly with the school seeking to work actively with parents to ensure a regular pattern is maintained. Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously. However, each case is different and the school acknowledges that a single standard response is not appropriate in all cases. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply.

What is attendance?

We aim to ensure that all children attend school regularly and on time wherever possible to ensure that they are able to make the most of the educational experiences offered at William Austin Infant School. We also aim to raise an awareness of the importance of attendance with our families so the school can work in partnership to improve attendance.

Why is attendance at school important?

‘School education lays the vital foundations of a child’s life. Research clearly demonstrates the link between regular attendance and educational progress and attainment. Parents/carers and the school staff should work in partnership to making education a success and in ensuring that all children have full and equal access to all that the school has to offer. As a school, we will encourage parents and carers to ensure that their child achieves maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent this are identified and acted upon promptly. Non-attendance at school, even for short periods, may jeopardise their future opportunities by limiting their educational experience’.

‘Here Today, Here Tomorrow’ Gulbenkian Foundation Booklet

How we achieve improvement

We aim to improve the levels of attendance through continuing to:

- promote a safe, caring and supporting school ethos
- provide a clean, attractive and pleasant physical environment
- promote a positive attitude towards school
- seek to enable all pupils to feel happy and secure
- deal with any difficulties experienced by pupils in a positive manner and in line with our approach to pastoral care
- seek to improve parental involvement
- monitor attendance regularly
- encourage good attendance and punctuality through a system of reward and recognition
- regularly inform parents of the attendance of all pupils

We use a computerised system of registration to enable us to gain detailed and accurate information more easily. We work closely with the Attendance Support Team and use a variety of strategies which seek to raise levels of attendance and punctuality. These include an incentives and rewards initiative which we continue to use to help improve children’s attendance.

Strategy to improve whole school attendance and punctuality

- Provide a clean, attractive and pleasant physical environment
- Ensure pupils feel happy and safe
- Promote a positive attitude towards school
- Monitor attendance regularly, identify any patterns and trends and feedback to parents, teachers and relevant staff members
- Support class teachers to identify absence and punctuality patterns and trends
- Liaise with and update Senior Attendance Champion, Attendance Officer, Family Worker and School Office staff regarding attendance issues/concerns and relevant updates
- The whole school knows that we expect a weekly attendance of at least 95% and are aiming for over 96% consistently. Attendance data is collated for the preceding week and used in whole school assemblies.
- Year 1 and Year 2 - The class that achieve the highest attendance for the preceding week are recognised and congratulated in our weekly celebration assembly and receive stickers. In addition, the Year 2 class are awarded the Attendance Trophy and Year 1 look after The Year 1 Attendance Bear for a week
- Year R - The class that achieve the highest attendance for the preceding week look after The Year R Attendance Bear for a week.

Strategy to improve Individual Attendance

- Children are rewarded for achieving 100% attendance for the term with a treat such as a show, picnic, book or anything else deemed appropriate by the school at the end of every term.
- We monitor individual attendance weekly and the Attendance Officer will follow up unexplained absences or patterns of absences and where appropriate refer them to the Family Worker or Attendance Support Officer.
- Parents are informed of procedures, their responsibilities and our expectations regarding attendance. They will receive a phone call from the School Attendance Officer where there are concerns. If there is no improvement in the child's attendance, the Attendance Support Officer is then involved.
- Meetings are held with parents to express concerns if attendance concerns are ongoing
- Requests for Term Time Leave will only be granted in exceptional circumstances (please refer to the Leave of Absence Guidance which is available on the school website or request a copy from the School Office)
- Where absence rates fall below 95%, parents may need to produce medical evidence or the absence will be unauthorised and could lead to a penalty notice being issued. Failure to pay the penalty will lead to prosecution.
- Meet with parents to express concerns if attendance falls below 90% and put targeted support in place or formal support in the form of a parenting contract (missing 10% puts a child at risk of persistent absence).
- Intensify support for children whose attendance is severe (below 50%), work alongside outside agencies as and when necessary, i.e. Family Partnership Team, School Nursing Team, Attendance Support Team and Children's Social Services.

Equal Opportunities and Attendance

In circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend school i.e. due to chronic illness, help can be given in relation to catching up with work missed. However, as children learn through practical and 'hands-on' approaches, they need to be present in school to make the most of teaching and learning.

We can offer:

- sessions to help catch up with work that has been missed
- teaching assistants and support staff providing individual attention where appropriate
- personal attention and encouragement from class teachers and other specified staff
- differentiation of tasks to best suit the needs of the individual pupil

- providing distant learning materials or liaise with relevant agencies in cases of longer absences, to support the pupil's learning at home
- use of the Family Worker to support the family

SECTION 2 – ATTENDANCE GUIDANCE

Parents and Carers' Responsibilities

- Parents and carers are by law required to make sure that their children who are on the school register attend school regularly and punctually
- Parents and carers are responsible for letting the school know about any pupil absence on the day of their absence
- If their child is not in school parents or carers should inform the school why not and indicate when he/she is likely to return
- Parents or carers must ensure that their child arrives and returns home safely

Parents and carers can inform the school of their child's absence by any other following methods:

- Telephone the school office (595198) or email (office@williamaustininfants.co.uk) on the day of absence
- Personal contact
- Letter signed by parent, if necessary written by another family member

Expectations of school and expectations of the governing bodies are also detailed on 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' (Aug 2024)

School Procedures

The School uses attendance registers and electronic recording to store and monitor our legal responsibilities in relationship to attendance.

Registers are a vital legal document and teachers are required by their contractual duties to take an attendance register at the beginning of both the morning and afternoon sessions. Registers must be completed carefully and accurately, as they provide a record of a pupil's attendance. Registers are returned to the School Office after the closure of the registration period.

Absence

Parents and/or Carers can be taken to court under the Education Act 1996 if they do not make sure their child attends school, without reason (as defined in law) and if the child has too many unauthorised absences. This could lead to prosecution in a magistrates' court and if found guilty, parents could be liable for a fine of up to £2500 or imprisonment.

It is the school's decision whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised. A note or telephone message from a parent will not count as an authorised absence if the reasons given are not acceptable to the school.

If any children are repeatedly absent from school without any communication from the parent, it is our policy to:

- Send a text message to the parent
- Follow up with phone call if there is no response, or if we have concerns that the child might be truanting
- Send a letter home if the child does not bring one with them when they return to school
- Make a home visit via the Family Worker to discuss reasons for absence
- Invite the parents to discuss the situation with the Headteacher

Further to the above procedures, if we still have concerns about a child's level of absence for which we have no legitimate explanation, we will contact the Attendance Support Team who will contact the family to try to resolve any difficulties. At this point we may record all subsequent

absences or times when the child is late as unauthorised absences unless covered by a medical certificate.

If any parents are concerned about any school issues, including attendance, they are welcome to come to the regular parents' consultation sessions to meet with the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher, or to make an appointment to see the class teacher. They may also ask to meet with the Family Worker.

The following table shows examples of authorised and unauthorised absences:

| Examples of Authorised Absence | Examples of Unauthorised Absence |
|--|--|
| Illness or unavoidable medical or dental treatment provided the school is satisfied the illness and appointments are genuine. Appointment cards or letters may require to be seen. Parents are encouraged to make non-urgent appointments out of school hours. | Where pupil misses registration and is unable to give an acceptable reason |
| Authorised leave of absence agreed with the school. | Medical and dental appointments wherever possible, could be made after school or during the school holidays. Leave of absence taken that is unauthorised and not agreed by the school |
| An agreed period for family bereavement * | Shopping during school hours |
| Religious observance days, the number and timing of each will be determined by the school, e.g. one day for each Eid festival ^ | Going to the airport to meet or say goodbye to relatives |
| | Looking after brothers or sisters |
| Off-site activities, e.g. music exams, participation in music festivals, representative sporting event or competitions during school time * | Absence for more than the agreed period. |
| | Additional days taken other than those specified by the school |
| | Attendance at any event without prior agreement with the school |
| | Term time leave except in exceptional circumstances |
| | Several medical related absences unsupported by medical note and where attendance has not improved. |

* Authorised leave of absence for these situations may be considered by the Headteacher. Refer to '**Leave of Absence**' sections for guidance on school policy.

^ The Governing body has decided that only religious festival days will be agreed (e.g. one day for each Eid festival or for Diwali) with a total of 2 days during the whole school year.

Lateness

- Pupils arriving after 8.55 a.m. will be recorded as late
- Pupils arriving after 8:55 a.m. must report to the School Office so that their attendance can be recorded.
- Pupils arriving after 9.25 a.m. will be recorded 'Unauthorised Late'. This will be recorded as an unauthorised absence on the school system for statistical purposes, unless a satisfactory reason is given, for example a medical appointment. Lateness is monitored.

- Action to address lateness will be taken in line with the school's strategy to improve punctuality. Sanctions will not be imposed on pupils as it is the responsibility of parents and carers to ensure they arrive at school on time in the Infant school.
- The school will speak to parents regarding punctuality
- If lateness is persistent, make a home visit via the Family Worker
- We expect parents and carers to collect their children promptly at the end of the school day as it is upsetting for children if they do not. Children who are not collected within 10 minutes of the end of the school day are brought to the school office and their names are recorded. The same procedures for late arrival are followed.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

All schools are required by law to keep an attendance register and to mark any absence as either 'authorised' or 'unauthorised'. We must publish our attendance figure twice a year. A child's attendance record is printed on their school report and in this way is reported to parents and carers. Children's attendance records are also carried with them to their next class or school.

The Attendance Support Team works to support children to get the most from their education through regular and punctual school attendance. They will work with families experiencing difficulties in ensuring their children attend school. The Attendance Support Team has enforcement powers which are used to prosecute parents who fail to ensure their children attend school regularly.

Authorised and Unauthorised Leave of Absence during term time

The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 were amended and came into force from 1st September 2013 giving new powers to the Attendance Support Team, Headteachers and the Police to issue Penalty Notices for unauthorised absences, unauthorised lates and unauthorised term time leave from school as an alternative to prosecution. The fine for a First Offence is currently £80 per parent, per child, if paid within 21 days and £160 if paid within 28 days. A Second Offence within a 3-year period is charged at a flat rate of £160 per parent, per child. If a third unauthorised leave of absence is taken within three years of the first one this may result in prosecution.

The current Leave of Absence Guidance has removed all references to 'holiday' from school and extended leave of absence as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. **Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances refers to a situation that requires immediate attention such as critical illness or death of a close family member. The school may ask for documentation.** Requests for leave of absence will not be granted for the purposes of a holiday. The law does not give any entitlement to parents to take their child on holiday during term time.

Parents are welcome to request a copy of the policy from the school office or download from the school's website.

What to do if you are intending to request Leave of Absence in term time

- Apply to the school for leave of absence by completing a school "Leave of Absence for Extended Holiday Leave" form available in the school office detailing the requested departure and return dates and reasons.
- If leave has been agreed, book tickets with the travel agent and bring the tickets to the school office for verification of return date.
- Once the dates have been seen to comply with the agreed dates, you will be given a letter of confirmation.

- Our records show that on many occasions pupils who are taken on extended visits abroad are ill prior to or after their return. We reserve the right to request official verification of any illness that prevents return to school.

Possible consequences of your child having unauthorised absences

1. If parents and carers take their child out of school for an unauthorised leave of absence this will be referred to the Attendance Support Team.
2. The parent of any pupil who incurs 8 sessions of unauthorised absence will be issued with a Penalty Notice Warning Letter, absences following the letter will be unauthorised (unless medical evidence is provided) and could lead to a Penalty Notice being issued by the Local Authority.
3. The parent of any pupil who incurs 10 sessions of unauthorised absence will be issued with a penalty notice under the Penalty Notice Code of Conduct. Penalty Notices are per parent, per child as appropriate. If a pupil incurs 20 consecutive days of unauthorised absence the pupil may be removed from the school roll. If this occurs the school will inform the Attendance Support Team and will complete a Children Missing Education (CME) form. The parent will be informed of this action (having previously been made aware of the possibility) and that they (the parent/carer) will be required to apply for a new school place via Luton Borough Council Admissions Service.

Reviewed and updated Jan 2025 to adopt LBC Model Policy

Review Date January 2027