



MIDDLESEX
LEARNING
PARTNERSHIP

ATTENDANCE POLICY

WILLIAM BYRD PRIMARY ACADEMY

APPROVED BY: PRIMARY LGB

DATE: OCTOBER 2023

NEXT REVIEW DUE: OCTOBER 2026

1. The Importance of Good Attendance

At William Byrd Primary Academy, we believe that good attendance is central to children achieving, making good progress and forming good relationships.

This is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education, it is vital that they attend regularly and children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

'Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.'

**School Attendance: Department for Education
October 2014**

'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 a school or by education otherwise than at a school.'

**Working Together to Improve School Attendance: Department for Education
Published May 2022, Applies September 2022.**

As the visual below, states the correlation between attendance and academic performance is crucial and therefore always a priority of focus for William Byrd:



2. Policy Aim

The aim of William Byrd Primary Academy's attendance policy is to enable the school to provide a consistent practice that encourages and facilitates the regular attendance of all pupils. Regular attendance at school is key to steady pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the school is dedicated to ensuring its attendance policy is adhered to as much as is possible.

William Byrd Primary Academy takes a whole-school approach to maintaining excellent attendance and it is the joint responsibility of parents, pupils and all staff members to ensure that children are attending school as they should be. We endeavour to work with families to make sure that any problems or circumstances which may lead or be leading to poor attendance are given the right attention and appropriate support.

This policy is intended to:

- 1) Foster a shared understanding of the importance of good attendance across the whole school community;
- 2) Promote good attendance and punctuality;
- 3) Reduce unnecessary absences;
- 4) Address persistent absenteeism;
- 5) Establish protocols to ensure that attendance issues are addressed early and effectively;
- 6) Build effective working relationships with parents and carers to ensure that every child is accessing education.

3. Legal Framework

This policy has been amended to comply with the Department for Education Advice (DfE) on School Attendance (August 2020- updated July 2021).

This policy meets the requirement of Working together to improve school attendance outlined by the Department for Education (DfE).

It also follows the following legislation and guidance:

- Statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures
- The Education Act 1996 (Part 6)
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003
- The Education Act 2002 (Part 3)
- The Education Act 2005
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006 (Part 7)
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The England (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013.
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016
- The Education (Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders) (England) Regulations 2007
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 and amendments •The Education and Skills Act 2008

When applying this policy, our school is aware of its obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Parents/Carers

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, we request that parents:

- work in partnership with the school;
- ensure that their child is in school each day, except for when a statutory reason applies;
- follow the set school procedure for reporting the absence of their child from school and include an expected date for return;
- do everything they can to prevent unnecessary school absences and book any non-emergency medical and dental appointments outside of the school day, where possible;
- ensure that leave of absence is only requested in exceptional circumstances and, where possible, advance notice is given;
- respond to call requesting reason for absence;
- complete slips with reasons for absence if received;
- engage with any support offered to address any barriers to their child's attendance;
- ensure children arrive at school on time;
- ensure a good attitude to learning;
- meet the social and emotional needs of the children;
- ensure their contact details are up to date;
- work with external agencies to support pupils and their families who are struggling with regular attendance;
- report any academic or social concerns promptly;
- retain open and honest communication with the school;
- do not take their children out of school for holidays during term time.

Pupils

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, we request that pupils:

- attend school punctually every day;
- attend all lessons on time;
- engage with any support offered by the school to help them overcome any barriers to attendance;
- communicate with parents and the school about any worries or anxieties;
- go to bed at an age-appropriate time and come to school on time and ready to learn.

The School

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the school's teachers and support staff will:

- provide a welcome and safe environment
- communicate with parents and carers
- text or call parents for reasons of absence if they have not been reported
- send home slips requesting reasons for absence if no reason reported
- provide education appropriate to the child
- promote and celebrate good attendance for all
- keep accurate and up to date records on children's punctuality and attendance and liaise with the Local Authority (LA) regarding concerns over children's attendance
- complete a monthly return to the Local Authority highlighting any persistent absentee (PA) children
- work with external agencies to support pupils and their families who are struggling with regular attendance
- follow the Local Authority's (LA) protocols for school attendance.

The Governors

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the governing body will:

- ensure the school fulfils statutory attendance requirements;
- ensure there is a clear policy and guidance applied fairly by the Head Teacher;
- work with leaders to establish policies, protocols and expectations relating to attendance;
- reinforce the importance of attendance in documentation and communications as appropriate;
- ensure that key staff receive relevant training relating to attendance;
- review and analyse attendance data and support leaders to address any issues that become apparent;
- take time at governors' meetings to review and discuss attendance issues that have arisen;
- keep up to date with change in guidance and legislation and ensure that leaders are aware of any changes;
- appoint a governor with responsibility for behaviour and attendance.

The Head teacher

The Head teacher will:

- take responsibility for the implementation of this policy;
- monitor school-level attendance and absence data and communicate key information and data to those responsible for governance;
- monitor the impact of any attendance strategies and systems that are in place, identifying new approaches where relevant;
- ensure that there are systems in place so that when a pupil has a social worker, they are informed about any unexplained absences;
- liaise with attendance staff to identify when it would be appropriate to issue fixed penalty notices;
- decide whether requests for leave should be granted in exceptional circumstances.

Designated Senior Leader for Attendance

It is expected that schools will have a designated senior leader for attendance. At our school, this person is Kerrie Newby who is the Assistant Head teacher. The senior leader will:

- oversee attendance across the school;
- foster a clear vision and expectations throughout the school community;
- identify and devise systems and interventions to improve attendance;
- arrange meetings, alongside the Pastoral Manager, to address attendance issues;
- advise the head teacher, alongside the Pastoral Manager, where it would be appropriate to consider a fixed penalty notice.

The contact details for our designated senior leader are:

Kerrie Newby
knewby@williambyrd.school

School Leadership Team

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the school leadership team will:

- be active in their approach to promoting good attendance to pupils and their parents, which includes forming positive relationships with families

- ensure that the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement
- ensure that systems to record and report attendance data are in place and working effectively
- develop multi-agency relationships to help with poor attendance and support families who are having difficulties getting their child to attend
- document any specific interventions or steps taken to work with families to improve their child's attendance in case of future legal proceedings

Attendance Staff

Those responsible for the day-to-day oversight of attendance at William Byrd Primary Academy will:

- monitor individual and group attendance on a day-to-day basis;
- gather information and produce reports relating to attendance (as required by leaders);
- work with the Attendance Support Team and any other external partners to tackle attendance issues;
- deliver targeted interventions where a need has been identified;
- provide additional support for attendance in line with the school's policy;
- answer and record attendance-related phone calls from parents/carers;
- ensure that any safeguarding concerns are reported using the school's agreed safeguarding systems and protocols;
- carry out home visits where appropriate.

Class teachers

Class teachers will:

- complete attendance registers at the times specified by the school using the school's agreed systems;
- use accurate attendance and absence codes as set out in Working together to improve school attendance.

5. Protocols and Procedures

Recording attendance

In line with statutory requirements, we will keep a register of school attendance and ensure that the name of every pupil is entered onto the register, irrespective of whether they are of statutory school age or not.

The school will add pupils to the admission register at the beginning of the first day on which it has agreed with (or been notified by) the parent that the pupil will attend the school. If a pupil fails to attend school on the agreed starting day, the school will follow this up and establish the reason for absence.

Once a pupil is added to the admissions register, their attendance or absence will be recorded for each session. The register will take place at the start of the school day and also once during the second session. Codes recorded on the register will be in line with the guidelines set out in Section 8 of Working together to improve school attendance.

The school will also record:

- whether the absence is authorised or not (if the pupil is of compulsory school age);
- the nature of any off-site activity;
- any exceptional circumstances that have resulted in an absence.

Monitoring and analysing attendance

- We monitor the attendance of our pupils so that we can identify any issues, concerns and patterns of absence. We use a range of systems to monitor absence on a daily, weekly, termly, half-termly and annual basis. We monitor the attendance of individuals, groups and cohorts, as well as looking at attendance patterns across the whole school.
- We will use our monitoring data to identify any individuals, groups or patterns that are a cause for concern and then take measures to address these. This data will be used in discussions with families and when evaluating the impact of any attendance strategies that we implement.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Creating a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- give parents details on attendance in our regular newsletters and on the school website
- report to parents at least termly with their child's attendance and punctuality rate
- report to parents how their child is performing in school and how their attendance relates to their attainments at every Parents' Evening and written school reports
- celebrate good attendance by displaying class achievements on a school attendance board
- reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings/events
- run promotional events when parents, pupils and staff can work together towards raising attendance levels across the school
- celebrate attendance with children in whole school assemblies every week for KS1 & KS2 with rewards for the winning classes.
- hold termly attendance meetings in school with the Participation Officer from the Local Authority
- hold internal attendance meetings with the parents of children who are at risk of becoming Persistent Absentees

6. Support

William Byrd Primary Academy offers a variety of different support to students and their families to positively reinforce good attendance and punctuality. This may include support from the Attendance Officer, the Pastoral Manager and Inclusion Team, the Class Teacher, the Year Group Leader, and Senior Leadership Team.

Where the school has concern over a child's or a family's attendance, a letter will be sent to remind the family about the importance of attendance and draw their attention to current concerns the school have. If concerns around attendance still remain, an attendance meeting at school will be called with the parents/carers to work with the school to understand barriers to attendance and then next steps will be agreed. Each term, the school will hold a meeting with an assigned Attendance Officer from the Local Authority to review cases where attendance has fallen below 90% and have unauthorised absences and look at next steps to try to improve attendance. The school also works with a variety of external agencies to support students who are absent from school and their families.

The breakfast club at William Byrd Primary Academy is open to all children from 7.30am and is offered to all children in Reception to Year 6 where attendance and punctuality is an issue to encourage the children to arrive early, start the day in a calm atmosphere and we offer all children a healthy breakfast.

In exceptional circumstances the school will endeavour to assist with collecting children from home and bringing them in to school. Attendance is monitored closely and school staff will visit the home where it is felt to be appropriate if a child is absent without a valid reason.

7. Categories of Absence

Absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence is given to the school. Parents cannot authorise absences.

Staff should make it clear on the school register when taking attendance whether a child's absence is authorised or unauthorised. If staff have concerns regarding absences, they should follow the school's safeguarding procedures.

When a child is to be absent from school without prior permission, parents should inform the school by telephone on the first day of absence and let them know what date they expect the child to return. For a prolonged absence, this should be followed up with a written note from the parent/carer of the child.

Illness

Most cases of absence due to illness are short term, but parents are expected to make a phone call to alert the school on each day of absence. When the child returns to school they should bring a note from their parent explaining the absence – this is for the school records.

For prolonged absence (for more than 3 days) due to illness, parents may be asked to provide the school with medical evidence such as a note from the child's doctor, an appointment card or a prescription paper.

Medical or dental appointments

Parents are expected to make every effort to ensure these appointments are made outside school hours. Where it cannot be avoided, children are expected to attend school for as much of that day as possible.

Authorised absences

There may be some exceptional circumstances where the school will authorise absence. Each case is taken on its individual merit.

Exclusion

Exclusion is treated as an authorised absence.

Family holidays and extended leave

The school believes that taking holidays in term time affects children's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time.

The school **will not** authorise any holidays during term time and this applies to all year groups, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Furthermore, a parent/carer choosing to take their child on holiday in term time without authorisation will be identified in the Local Authority checking of pupil absence and will risk a penalty notice of £60 per parent per child on return from holiday. If unauthorised leave is repeated it can result in a Court Summons being issued to each parent. Booking confirmation and holiday details will be requested for all unauthorised holidays.

Religious observance

William Byrd Primary Academy recognises that there may be times where children of different faiths observe religious festivals that fall outside of school holidays and weekends, and will allow authorised absence for these times. Children are not expected to miss more than 3 days in any school year for religious observance.

Parents will be aware of these dates and should give the school written notification in advance.

8. Understanding types of absence:

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absence

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, an emergency or other unavoidable causes.

The following will give a guide as to whether the absence is likely to be authorised.

Typical scenarios for authorised absences include:

- illness;
- emergency medical and dental appointments;
- religious observance for recognised religious holidays/festivals;
- a pupil taking part in a performance if the local authority has granted a licence for this;
- a pupil being suspended or excluded;
- pupils on a temporary, part-time timetable, where this has been arranged by the school;
- bereavement (close friend or family member);

In the examples listed above, the school will still usually need to grant permission for the absence to be authorised.

Unauthorised absence

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- parents/carers 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
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed
- excessive illness without medical evidence

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child.

Unauthorised absence is where a pupil's absence is for a reason that is deemed to be unacceptable by the school or where the reason for a pupil's absence has not been provided and cannot be established.

In the case of illness, the absence will usually be authorised unless there are grounds for concern that the illness may not be authentic. In these instances, the school may ask for supplementary evidence, such as a doctor's note, appointment card, medical report, etc. The school will not ask for this additional evidence unnecessarily.

If, after requesting evidence, the school is still not satisfied that the reason given is genuine, it will be recorded as unauthorised. Parents or carers will be informed of this.

Non-emergency appointments

We request that non-emergency medical and dental appointments are booked outside of the school day to minimise lost learning time. Where this is not possible, permission for absence should be sought in advance.

9. Punctuality/Late Arrival

Pupils must arrive at school on time each day.

Registration starts at 8.40am for all children and closes at 8.50am.

Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late using the appropriate code. Any child arriving after these times must report to the late entrance to be signed in by a member of the attendance team. The late entrance closes at 9.10am after this time, the parent and child must report to the main office.

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day, they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day ahead. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, which can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage future absences.

Persistent lateness could also result in a fine from the Local Authority.

The school day ends at 3.20pm.

10. Absence Procedures

If a parent or carer needs to report an absence to the school, they should follow the agreed procedures as set out below:

- contact the Attendance Officer by telephone on the absence line to update every day of their child's absence (Option 1) or call into school and report the absence to reception to leave a message for the Attendance Officer;
- if the absence is due to illness and is longer than two days, they may be asked to provide medical evidence (e.g. note from medical practitioner or photocopy of prescription);
- respond to text messages or a call from the school if parents/ carers have been unable to call themselves.

If a child is absent the school may:

- telephone or text parents on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them;
- invite parents to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer and/or Pastoral Manager;
- refer the matter to the Local Authority Attendance Support Officer if the absence lasts for more than

10 days without authorisation.

Requesting Term Time Absence

Requests for advanced approval of term-time absence will not be granted unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Parents or carers should plan their holidays around school holidays and avoid seeking permission to take their children out of school during term time, unless it is absolutely unavoidable.

If there are exceptional circumstances, then a request can be made to the Headteacher in writing. Requests for term-time absences should be made as soon as possible and at least two weeks before the absence is due to take place. However, we recognise that in some rare instances, this will not always be possible.

Requests for term-time absences will be considered on a case-by-case basis taking the facts, circumstances and any supporting evidence into consideration. Leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances is at the discretion of the headteacher. This includes the length of time that the leave will be granted for.

11. Persistent Absenteeism (PA):

We will identify and address instances of persistent and severe absence.

- Persistent absence is defined as a pupil who is absent for 10% or more of scheduled sessions. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parent/carer's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.
- Severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of scheduled sessions. We will identify persistent and severe absence using the systems for monitoring and analysis.

To respond to persistent and severe absence, the school will seek to identify and address root causes. As there are a wide range of reasons for this occurring, the response will be determined on a case-by-case basis. However, typical strategies will include:

- supporting the pupil and their family to understand the reasons that attendance is important and the possible implications of repeated absences;
- enhanced monitoring of individual pupils where attendance is (or could be) an issue;
- holding meetings with parents or carers to discuss concerns;
- offering specific pastoral support using the resources and staffing already available within the school;
- working with external partners to address the underlying factors that are causing the absence;
- issuing warning letters and fixed penalty notices;

We monitor all absences thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents will be informed of this immediately. PA students are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic monitoring where absence affects attainment. Where a child's attendance is a concern, the school will send a letter warning of the current attendance record and highlighting the importance of good attendance. If the problem persists, a second letter will be sent, inviting the parent/carer to attend a meeting about attendance. Finally, if there is no improvement then a third letter will be sent inviting the parent/carer to an attendance panel. All PA cases are automatically made known to the Local Authority Attendance Support Officer as part of termly meetings that take place between the school and the Local Authority.

<p>Parents are responsible for making sure their child attends school to meet the Government target of at least 95%</p>
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12. School Action: following up absences

Class registers are checked by the school Attendance Officer at the end of the registration period. Where there are unexplained or unauthorised absences, the school will contact the parents or carers. If a pattern of unauthorised absences emerges, the school Attendance Officer will contact the parent or carer to discuss possible reasons and school support systems that could help.

If the attendance rate fails to improve the school will invite the parents/carers into school to discuss attendance and work together to set up an attendance contract.

Where a child has been absent from school for a period of more than 20 school days, and where the absence was unauthorised and both the school and LA have been unable to contact the parents, the school may remove the child from the school roll.

The Local Authority Attendance Support Officer

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Local Authority Attendance Support Officer.

He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persists, these Officers can use sanctions such as **Penalty Notices (currently £60 rising to £120 if unpaid within 21 days. If unpaid after 28 days a summons to Court will be issued for each unpaid Penalty Notice)** or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. The legislation is the Education Act 1996 sec. 441(1) and 444(1A).

"If any child of compulsory school age who is a registered student at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence".

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the Local Authority Attendance Team themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is 01895 250858 or participationteam@hillingdon.gov.uk

Legal sanctions for addressing attendance issues

Schools, the police and local authorities have legal powers to fine parents or carers for unauthorised absences. These powers only exist where the child is of statutory school age.

Decisions on whether to issue a penalty are made after considering a number of factors, including:

- the number of unauthorised absences in the last [academic year/12-month period/other];
- one-off absences that have been taken without school permission, e.g. term-time holidays;
- whether an excluded or suspended pupil is found in a public place during school hours without good reason;
- whether there are exceptional circumstances that explain an absence that would usually be unauthorised.

Legal sanctions will only be pursued when the family concerned have been offered support and this has either been unsuccessful or the family have failed to engage.

If a parent or carer is issued with a fine or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days. If the fine is not paid promptly, this will rise to £120 within 28 days. This payment is made directly to the local authority. Instructions for payment will be given when the fine is issued. After 28 days, the local authority will decide whether to withdraw the notice or pursue a prosecution.

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its attendance figures and its attendance policy to parents and to promote attendance. School attendance data must be made available to the Local Authority and the Department for Education as required. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and students as the best way to ensure as high level of attendance as possible.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years. If there are any changes in legislation or government updates, the policy may need to be reviewed before the next scheduled update. The policy will be reviewed by the Head teacher and approved by the Governing body.

APPENDIX 1

William Byrd Primary Academy Absence Procedures

School gates open at 8.35am for registration.	
Registration begins at 8.40am and ends at 8.50am.	
L A T E N E S S	A B S E N C E
School gates close at 8.50am. Any child arriving after this time must report to the late entrance to be signed in by a member of the attendance team.	Parents/ carers should inform the school about a child's absence by calling the Attendance Officer (option 1).
Time of arrival will be recorded and the minutes late marked into the register.	If there is no contact or explanation of absence on the first day, the school will attempt to contact parents/ carer (s) on that day for an explanation via text or phone call.
If a pattern of lateness occurs, the school will either write to parents/carers regarding this or arrange a meeting with them. If the pattern persists after this then a referral will be made to Hillingdon Stronger Families.	An absence will be considered as authorised if an acceptable explanation by telephone or in writing is made to the school. The school will ask for evidence and the symptoms the child may have.
	The reason for absence will be recorded in the register alongside the child's name and coded accordingly (authorised or unauthorised).
If there is no response after 3 attempts to contact home, the absence will be recorded in the register as unauthorised. If there are any safeguarding concerns, then a welfare visit (home visit) will be conducted by school staff to ensure the welfare of the child.	
If a child has 3 days of more unauthorised absence in a half term, the parent/ carer will be invited to a meeting to discuss the child's absence.	
If the parent/ carer fails to respond to this and there is not an improvement in attendance/	

punctuality, then the school will seek advice and support of the LA Stronger Families Team and Attendance Support.

If a child's attendance is below 90% this is regarded as Persistent Absenteeism and the school will work with families and other agencies to highlight the impact of low attendance on the child.