

## Policy for Attendance

**Under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act, a pupil is required to attend regularly at the school where he, or she, is a registered pupil.**

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 Junior School. We also aim to raise awareness of the importance of attendance with our families.

### **Why is attendance at school important?**

‘The future for young people is changing rapidly. The nature of employment is being transformed by the implementation of new technology and global economic factors. Young people need to achieve higher educational levels than at any time in the past. 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 shall 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 behaviour policy;
- seek to improve parental involvement;
- monitor attendance regularly.

We will use a variety of strategies which seek to raise levels of attendance and punctuality.

### **Target Setting**

In consultation with our Education Welfare Officer, the school will adopt a target figure for attendance each year. The overall school target will not be lower than a minimum 96% attendance.

### **Equal Opportunities and Attendance**

In circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend school help can be given in relation to:

- catching up with work missed;
- long absences, providing distance learning materials;
- 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;
- use of Family Workers to support families experiencing difficulties

## **ATTENDANCE GUIDANCE**

### **Parents’ Responsibilities**

- Parents are by law required to make sure that their children who are on the school register attend school regularly and punctually.
- Parents are responsible for letting the school know about any pupil absence on the first day of the absence.
- If their child is not in school parents should indicate when he/she is likely to return.

Parents can inform the school of their child’s absence by any of the following methods:

- telephone
- personal contact
- letter signed by parent, even if written by another family member

- e-mail

### School Procedures

The School uses SIMS to store and monitor our legal responsibilities in relationship to attendance. This system consists of specialised software.

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 completed on the computer and sent electronically to the school office.

### Absence

Parents 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.

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 letter to the parent with a reply slip to enquire as to the reason for the absence;
- follow up with phone call if there is no response, or if we have concerns that the child might be truanting;
- make a home visit via the Family Workers or Education Welfare Officer.

The following table shows examples of authorised and unauthorised absences:

Examples of Authorised Absence	Examples of Unauthorised Absence
Illness, medical or dental appointment, provided the school is satisfied the illness and appointments are genuine	Where pupil misses registration and is unable to give an acceptable reason
Special occasions as agreed with the school as an authorised absence *	Additional days taken for special occasions or days other than those specified by the school
An agreed period for family bereavement*	Going to the airport to meet or say goodbye to relatives
Religious observance days; the number and timing of each will be determined by the school, e.g. one day for each Eid festival	Absence for more than the agreed period
Off-site activities, eg music exams, participation in music festivals, representative sporting event during school time	Additional days taken other than those specified by the school
Term time leave, as agreed by the school in accordance with the guidance given in this document *	Attendance at any event without prior agreement with the school
	Term time leave without prior authorisation by the school
	Several medical related absences where attendance is below 90% *

\* Authorised leave of absence for exceptional situations may be considered by the Headteacher.

### Timing of the School Day

	Session starts (Early Bird start)	Register taken (Bell rings)	Registration period closes	Register closes	Session ends
Morning	8:48am (8:40am)	8:48am	8:55am	9:25am	12:10 or 12:30*
Afternoon	1:10 or 1.28*	1:30	1:35	1:35	3:30

\*depending on year group

### Lateness

- Pupils arriving after the registration period has closed at 8:55am will be recorded as late.

- Pupils arriving after 8:55am must report to the School Office so that their attendance can be recorded.
- Pupils arriving after 9.25am will be recorded 'Unauthorised Late'. This will be considered an unauthorised absence 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:
  - Send letter to parent with a reply slip to enquire as to the reason for the lateness.
  - Follow up with phone call if there is no response.
  - Make a home visit via the Family Workers or Education Welfare Officer.

### **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. Children's attendance records are also carried with them to their next class or school.

### **Leave of Absence during term time**

The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 have been amended and come into force from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013. **Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.**

Requests for leave of absence should not normally 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. Head Teachers have the discretion to authorise leave of absence in **exceptional** circumstances and it is only for the Head Teacher to determine what is truly exceptional. School days are precious; children only attend school 190 out of 365 days. There are 175 days a year which parents can use for any activities other than school.

### **Applications for Leave of absence**

Requests must be made in advance or the leave cannot be authorised. All requests should normally be made at least two weeks in advance to the Head Teacher by completing the school application form. A parent/adult with whom the child resides with must make the application even though the pupil may not be taking the proposed leave with them. The form must be fully completed and you will receive a written response confirming if the request will be authorised or not. **If you are travelling abroad you will need to supply us with confirmation of your booking including date booked and return flight tickets, such as bringing a copy of the flight tickets into the school reception for us to copy.**

### **Unauthorised Absence**

If you take your child out of school without the school's prior authorisation the absence will be recorded as unauthorised (which is illegal) and noted in your child's school records. Leave of absence can only be authorised by the Head Teacher.

**Where a parent/carer has taken their child on leave of absence during term time for 5 consecutive school days or more, without the Head Teacher's authorisation, you could receive a Penalty Notice. In these circumstances a warning will not be given.** Penalty Notices are per parent, per child as appropriate, so if there are 2 parents both will need to pay the fine for each child. Penalty Notices will need to be paid within 21 days at £60 or £120 within 28 days, part payments are not accepted. There is no appeal process for a penalty notice. Unpaid Penalty Notices, result in prosecution for the absence in the magistrate's court. Please note all adults with care of the child are usually liable. Penalty Notices are an alternative to prosecution for failing to ensure a child's regular attendance and will only be used once per pupil in an academic year before prosecution takes place.

### **Failure to return to school on the date expected**

If there is a reason which delays the pupil in returning to school the parent/guardian must inform the school immediately. The school will require evidence of this issue and will then decide whether the absence will be authorised. For any travel arrangements outside of the UK we require proof of return flights, prior to the leave being taken - this may protect you from receiving unauthorised absence for your child and a fine if they are unable to return on the date expected.

Each case will be assessed individually and medical evidence from abroad is not routinely accepted. Please note prolonged unauthorised absence from school can also result in your child's name being removed from the school roll

and on return you would need to re-apply for another school place.

Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances as outlined by Luton Borough Council are:

- Where it is company/organisational policy for an employee to take leave at a specific time of year and there is no opportunity for a family holiday in a school holiday. This must be evidence by production of the policy document of the organisation
- Service personnel returning from/scheduled to embark upon duty aboard
- Where a holiday is recommended as part of a child's rehabilitation from a medical issue. Evidence must be provided.

Non exceptional circumstances are: funerals, weddings, bereavement, preference for undergoing medical treatment abroad, ill relation abroad and religious events (in the case of absence due to a religious event the actual day set aside for religious observance is authorised, but additional days off linked to the festival are not)

- Parents must make an appointment with the Headteacher to discuss any application for leave of absence during term time.
- Only in exceptional circumstances will leave be granted.
- If a request for authorised Leave of Absence is granted then it is unlikely that another such request will be granted for the duration of that child's time at the school.
- The period of leave authorised will not extend beyond 10 school days.
- No parent can demand Leave of Absence for the sole purpose of taking a holiday.
- In considering any application for leave during term time, we will take into account:

The child's previous attendance record; if this falls below 95% it is unlikely the request will be granted.

- National testing; Leave of Absence will not be authorised for pupils in Year 6 from January until they have sat their SATs in May.
- Leave of Absence will not normally be authorised at the start of Year 3 for pupils transferring from Year 2 to the Junior School.
- The child's progress; parents of children who are already experiencing difficulty with the curriculum may find their request declined.

Failure to return to school on the date expected

If there is a reason which delays the pupil in returning to school the parent must inform school immediately. The school will require evidence of this issue, for example from the pupil's UK doctor to say they have received medical attention.

Roll removal

A pupil can be removed from roll if:

- A child has had 20 days continuous unauthorised absence
- If a child is taken on a leave of absence which has been authorised by the school, but the child fails to return on the agreed date, any extra time absent from school will be counted as unauthorised
- If a child fails to return within ten days of the expected date of return, then the school may remove the child from the school role and notify the Local Authority accordingly.

The Governing body of William Austin Junior School has agreed to adopt this policy which is also a national policy and a policy endorsed by Luton Borough Council.

This policy will be monitored and reviewed on an annual basis.

Policy updated: July 2020

Staff responsible: Jo Adams

This policy was ratified by the Governing body/Local Authority on:

Signed on behalf of the Governing Body: \_\_\_\_\_(signature)

\_\_\_\_\_(printed)