



WIDDEN PRIMARY SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY



DATE APPROVED BY THE FULL GOVERNING BODY

7th March 2023

REVIEW CYCLE:

Annually

NEXT REVIEW DUE:

June 2023

Introduction

At Widden Primary School we believe that all children have the right to a full-time education regardless of age, aptitude and ability. Widden Primary School takes seriously its responsibility to monitor the regular attendance of all pupils, acknowledging that irregular attendance can seriously disrupt continuity of learning, can lead to underachievement and low attainment and impedes the child's ability to develop friendship groups within school.

Establishing a policy which actively promotes attendance and punctuality amongst pupils, forms part of our commitment to respect the right of every child, under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, to a quality education. (Article 28)

In promoting the belief that attendance and punctuality are important values we will be helping to equip our children for life and potentially impacting upon their futures as employees and employers.

We believe that:

- Prolonged and consistent absence, in any year group, affects access to the curriculum and ultimately impacts on progress.
- Repeated and consistent lateness is an unsettling start to the school day for both the child and school.

For pupils with learning difficulties this factor is even more important, as poor retention skills are often an obstacle to pupil progress.

The intention of the school is for all pupils to achieve their maximum possible attendance.

As a school we aspire for all of our children to achieve the attendance figure of at least 96% throughout the academic year.

Good attendance is important because:

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- Regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary

What the Law says about attendance

Parents have a legal obligation to ensure their children receive a full time education. This is achieved by regular attendance at school. Section 444 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 suitable to:

- Age, ability and aptitude and
- Any special educational needs he/ she may have either by regular attendance or otherwise.

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

Roles and Responsibilities

The DSL will oversee the Attendance Team and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and good attendance. The school is responsible for the accurate recording and monitoring of attendance and that the policy is consistently used. The Attendance Team will ensure that issues are identified as quickly as possible so that support can be offered and put in place prior to attendance becoming an issue.

a) Parents/Carer

The school always tries to work in partnership with parents. If pupils are not in school it is the parents' responsibility to inform the school on the first day of absence. If a pupil is absent, and no message has been received, the school will try to contact the parents to discover the reason as soon as possible.

If there is a specific problem with attendance caused by factors within school, this can usually be resolved quickly and informally between parents and school. If the problem is caused by domestic circumstances the school can assist parents by engaging the support of other agencies (e.g. Inclusion Team or Social Care).

Parents will be informed termly about their child's current attendance percentage at parent/carers meetings. Children whose attendance is below 95% will be monitored weekly and a structured range of generic/individual support/ intervention strategies will be applied as deemed necessary to any children falling below 90%.

In addition to this we ask parents to:

- Ensure their child attends school regularly and is properly equipped and in a fit state to learn every day that school is open
- Ensure that their children are punctual at the start of the school day
- Notify the school of any absences by 9.30am. All absences will be recorded as 'O' unauthorised until an explanation or evidence is provided. The onus is on the parent to inform the school and provide appropriate evidence if required
- Book medical and dental appointments outside of the school day whenever possible
- Provide explanation of absences on the first day a pupil returns to school if this has not already been done
- Provide the school with up to date contact details and telephone numbers for every adult with parental responsibility. If contact details change then we must be informed of new details within 24 hours;

- Complete a 'Leave of Absence' request form for any time required off school that is not due to illness or medical appointments i.e. exceptional circumstances. This must be made in writing (using the application form available from the school office) to the Head Teacher 15 days in advance of the proposed start date of the absence. The circumstances you consider 'exceptional' must be detailed
- Collect their children on time
- Avoid taking holidays in term time
- Avoid requesting non-urgent leave of absence
- Work with the school to improve matters if attendance becomes a problem;
- Keep school fully informed on all matters that might affect attendance and their child in school

b) Pupils

We ask pupils to:

- Attend school regularly and promptly
- Arrive at school on time
- Attend morning and afternoon registration promptly
- Understand the value of good attendance

b) Teachers

Teachers will:

- Set a good example of punctuality and good attendance
- Ensure that registers are taken at the appropriate times, are accurate and up to date
- Take appropriate action when pupils are late
- Monitor class and individual attendance patterns
- Inform SLT/ Head Teacher of any concerns about attendance or where attendance is impacting on a pupils' achievements
- Discuss individual pupil attendance at parent-teacher consultations
- Praise pupils for good punctuality and good attendance

c) Senior Leadership Team

Senior Leaders will:

- Have an identified member of SLT responsible for attendance – DSL
- Set clear and challenging attendance targets as part of school self- review
- Ensure that all school personnel, pupils and parents are aware of this policy
- Monitor trends and arrange for letters to be sent when required
- Provide target intervention and support for families whose children have been highlighted as having poor attendance
- Utilise the support of available specialists in relation to attendance if required
- Have a system in place for parents to report a child's absence

- Report to the Governing Board attendance figures and trends
- Promote the importance of good attendance through assemblies
- Celebrate and reward good attendance during assemblies both at individual and class level
- Be responsible for making a referral to Gloucestershire County Council Education Inclusion Team.
- Monitor individual, class and year group attendance

d) Attendance Team will:

- Make first day calling for children absent without explanation
- Call all numbers on the contact list in order until receive an answer
- Leave a voice message, if there is a voicemail option
- Notify SLT if an overseas ring tone is noted and no leave of absence has been requested. This may result in EIT being contacted in line with Children Missing in Education procedures.
- Call the contact list at least twice
- Issue first day contact methods if no response
- Monitor late entrants into school and adjust SIMS accordingly along with the time of arrival
- Forward phone messages to class teachers regarding absences and record reasons on CPOMS
- Contact parents when school has not been provided with a reason for absence
- Record medical appointments on CPOMS and state whether medical evidence has been seen if required
- Monitor register coding and alert staff of inconsistencies
- Produce reports as requested by EIT or SLT
- Produce attendance figures for end of year reports
- Update/notify SLT of any concerns

Education Inclusion Team (EIT):

The school uses the statutory EIT provision to respond to significant 'Unauthorised' absence concerns. There is a 'tiered' system of interventions, leading up to legal proceedings, to protect the pupil's educational development.

The school also makes use of additional Education Inclusion Advisor time to support cases where attendance becomes a serious concern but may not have reached the criteria for statutory Local Authority intervention, particularly in cases where children are deemed missing in education.

Attendance below 90% may result in a referral to the Education Inclusion Team and an Education Inclusion Advisor may make a home visit.

Strategies used to promote good attendance and punctuality with Pupils and Parents:

School attendance is monitored by the Attendance Team at Widden Primary School. This consists of: a Czech-Roma member of staff and a Gujarati speaking member of the Muslim community. These staff members are on the playground in the morning to greet parents to discuss attendance concerns. Attendance levels are discussed at staff meetings, inset days and reported back to School Governors at allocated times.

Attendance Celebrations/Rewards

Each week attendance is celebrated in an assembly. The class who achieve the best attendance are awarded a class Attendance Certificate and trophy.

Individual pupils are awarded with yearly 100% attendance certificates.

New Intake

For those parents whose children are beginning their school life at Widden Primary School, they receive an introductory talk by a member of the pastoral team which includes the subject of attendance. Good habits are promoted from the children's' first year of school in Reception Class and are continued to be encouraged right the way through to year 6.

Sanctions:

Sanctions for non-attendance are not deemed appropriate within school unless the pupil has been persistently absent for no known / unacceptable reason. This is because the school's first priority is to be motivating, and this would be totally undermined if the first thing that happened to an absentee pupil or their parents was punishment on return to school. In the case of unauthorised persistent absence, sanctions would be applied judiciously based upon individual merit.

Registration:

All pupils are registered on the SIMS registration system by 9.00am and a second register is taken by 13.30 by their class teacher, applying the current LA/DfE code guidelines.

Pupils are marked late if they arrive more than 15 minutes after these times (L). Registers are officially closed half an hour after these times and pupils are then marked as 'Unauthorised absence' (U) if they arrive later during the session, unless an acceptable authorised reason is given.

Late arrivals report to the office and telephone messages indicating that pupils will not be attending are recorded on the SIM register against that log.

Attendance Targets:

The school's aim is to get full attendance from all pupils. Attendance of individuals and classes will, however, be monitored in an attempt to provide information useful in monitoring the consistent application of this policy and improving levels of attendance.

Average primary school attendance in England is 96% and the figure OFSTED expects for your child is 96% or above. If your child's attendance falls below 95% where there are no known reasons, we may raise this as a concern and work in partnership with parents/carers and other agencies to resolve problems and improve attendance. Your child cannot make their best progress at school if they do not attend punctually and regularly.

If a child's attendance falls below 90% this is classed as 'Persistent Absence' and has serious consequences.

The class teachers are initially responsible for monitoring the attendance of the pupils in their class. They inform the DSL or a member of SLT if there is any cause for concern. These may include:

- Regular periods of unexplained non-attendance
- Patterns of non-attendance (e.g. every Monday morning)
- Regular late arrival in the mornings
- Attendance falling below that deemed acceptable
- Anecdotal evidence from the pupil or other pupils
- Absences coinciding with known domestic disruptions

Raw data, the overall figures for the school without identifying individual pupils, are passed on to the Local Authority (LA) and the DfE termly for statistical analysis.

Parents and pupils can have access to their own child's attendance data whenever requested.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence:

The definitions accepted by the school are those laid out in the DfE Document "*School Attendance: guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities*" (August 2020). These include clarification on authorised absences including hospital and medical appointments, sickness, etc.

If children have a medical/dental/specialist appointment they are normally expected to attend school on the morning or afternoon not affected by the appointment.

Many absences are authorised retrospectively when a pupil returns to school after illness, although the school is not obliged to give authorisation if there are doubts about the nature of the absence. **It is the decision of the school whether or not to authorise an absence.**

If we have concerns about the number of absences due to illness or medical appointments etc. we may ask you to provide some form of evidence (e.g. an appointment card or letter, Doctor's note, copy of a prescription, copy of the label from a prescription medicine etc.) before we are prepared to authorise absences.

Leave of Absence Request

It is necessary, for all parents to seek 'Leave of Absence' at least 15 school days before you are intending to take your child out of school. This can be done by completing a 'Leave of absence' form. A leave of absence request must be made by the parent/primary carer with whom the child normally resides and given to the Headteacher. There is no automatic right for approval to be granted. **The school will decide whether or not to authorise the request and cases will be considered on their individual merits.**

Requests for authorised 'Leave of Absence' will NOT usually be approved if:

- The child's attendance in the previous school year was less than 96%
- The child's attendance at the time of the request is less than 96% Parents/Carers will be

informed of the school's decision as soon as possible.

Other reasons for extended absence and requests for leave in term time

a) Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

All staff are trained and made aware about possible reasons for extended absence from school. One of these could be Female genital mutilation (FGM), which is a form of child abuse common to some African, Asian and Middle Eastern communities in the UK. The age at which girls are subject to FGM varies greatly from shortly after birth to any time up to adulthood. Victims are usually aged between four and ten, primary school age. It is illegal in the UK to subject a child to female genital mutilation (FGM) or to take a child abroad to undergo the procedure – Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003.

Any information or concern that a child is at immediate risk of or has undergone FGM or forced marriage will result in a child protection referral under school procedures to the Designated Safeguarding Lead in the first instance and then to Children and Families Team/ MASH and Gloucestershire Police Service. Records of all incidents will be kept following the same procedure as for all other child protection concerns in school in line with current policy.

Please note that teachers and members of staff with teaching responsibilities have a specific legal duty to act with regards to concerns about female genital mutilation and must personally report to the police a disclosure that FGM has been carried out, in addition to liaising with the DSL/Children's social care.

b) Children Missing in Education (CME)

Knowing where children are during school hours is an extremely important aspect of Safeguarding. Missing school can be an indicator of abuse and neglect and may also raise concerns about other safeguarding issues, including the criminal exploitation of children. This is why we will always follow up with parents/carers when pupils are not at school.

In response to the guidance in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2022) the school has:

- Staff who understand what to do when children do not attend regularly
- Appropriate policies, procedures and responses for pupils who go missing from education (especially on repeat occasions).
- Procedures to inform the local authority when we plan to take pupils off-roll when they:
 - leave school to be home educated
 - move away from the school's location
 - are permanently excluded

We will ensure that pupils who are expected to attend the school, but fail to take up the place will be referred to the local authority. When a pupil leaves the school, we will record the name of the pupil's new school and their expected start date.

Where children have poor attendance or are regularly missing then the school works in close liaison with the Local Authority CME officer, admissions team and GSCP.

Further information can be found can be found in 'Children Missing Education: statutory guidance for local authorities' – 5th September 2016

Religious Observance

'Religious Observance' requests will usually be granted for a maximum of **three** days during a year for, "a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs" (Pupil Registration Regulations 2006). These days should relate to significant festivals in the relevant faith calendar.

Again, the school will decide whether or not to authorise requests and cases will be considered on their individual merits. Parents/Carers will be informed of the school's decision as soon as possible.

Poor attendance

When concerns have been raised the school's first course of action is to contact the parents to see if there are specific problems, either at home or in school, that can be easily remedied. The attendance rate is then monitored by the school and if attendance improves significantly no further action is taken.

If the problems persist then the Head Teacher and the Education Inclusion Team will consider other strategies, dependent on the individual case. These may include a specific contract system within school, the issuing of a fixed penalty notice, notification of concern regarding the pupil's welfare to Social Services or even, in extreme cases, legal action.

The following sequence illustrates the monitoring and intervention procedures followed by the school:

1. Morning and afternoon register entries by class teacher
2. Received absence messages noted on SIMS
3. Daily register check for uninformed absences
4. 1st day of absence if no message: phone parent/carer and leave message if no reply. For children who fall under the persistent absence category, a home visit will be carried out on the first day of absence.
5. 2nd day of absence if no message: phone again, and try emergency contacts. A home visit will be carried out.
6. If a message is received, enter it onto SIMS and onto CPOMS.
7. Continue to make daily home visits if no messages are received. Add concerns onto CPOMS, update SIMS and advise DSL, Education Inclusion Team and Children's services advisor.
8. Regular contact with parent/carer during prolonged absences.

Prior to a referral to Education Inclusion Team (EIT):

- School will inform parents of their concerns in relation to their child's attendance in writing, offering them to contact the school to discuss reasons impacting on their attendance.
- School will invite parents/ carers into school for an Attendance Improvement Meeting (AIM) where an attendance plan is drawn up.
- If there has been no improvement, the school will write to parents informing them that a referral to Gloucestershire's EIT will be made and may result in a Fixed Penalty Fine or legal action if unauthorised absences continue to occur.

Long Term Sickness Absence

If a child needs to be hospitalised for 3 days or more we can make a referral to the Hospital Education Service so that they work with your child whilst they are not in school. This would be coded as 'D' which means that your child would be educated off site and would not affect their overall attendance percentage.

Re-entry strategies for long term absentees:

When long-term non-attenders return to school the staff attempt to make them feel welcome back at school without drawing attention to the prolonged absence. The pupils are placed back in their class and given their individual programmes of work to continue.

If there are specific reasons where this is not felt to be appropriate, separate arrangements would be made. This would be considered on an individual needs basis.

Summary:

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to guarantee as high a level of attendance as possible and that through good attendance ensures every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed by the Head Teacher, Senior Leadership Team, class teachers and the Governing Board on a three year cycle. However, the school retains the right to review this policy earlier if deemed necessary.