



WILLIAM HARDING SCHOOL
Aim high... Work hard... Be kind...

Chair of Governors: Mrs J Cayless	Headteacher: Miss Cotchin
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1: Attendance Legislation

Under section 7 of the Education Act 1996 the parent is responsible for making sure that their child of compulsory school age receives full time education that is suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs that the child may have. This can be regular attendance at school or by education otherwise.

If a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, then the parent is guilty of an offence under Section 444(1) / (1A) of the Education Act 1996.

*"Schools have a responsibility to engage pupils in learning and to promote attendance"
DFES Publication –Tackling it together*

If children are to succeed in their education and reach their full potential, it is essential they attend school regularly and are punctual. Parents are informed of the school's expectations and procedures through induction processes, newsletters and other communication between school and home.

Our school staff will always contact parents to notify them of a cause for concern in relation to their child's attendance.

2: Aims

- William Harding School seeks to ensure that all children in its care receive a full-time education which maximises opportunities for achieving their potential.
- The school strives to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the community feels safe and valued.
- All staff will work with children and their families to encourage each child to attend school regularly and punctually.
- The school operates an effective system of age-appropriate incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of children and families to improve attendance and punctuality and will challenge and support families and parents / carers who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.

To meet these objectives, the school will establish an effective and efficient system of communication with children, parents and appropriate external agencies to provide mutual information, guidance and support. The school has a computerised attendance package (SIMS) which is used to take twice daily registers and monitor attendance data.

3: Home/School Partnership

Securing a high level of attendance requires the school and home to work closely together. In order to achieve this, it is essential that parents/carers:

- Ensure their child attends school regularly and on time.
- Notify the school of a child's illness on the first day using the absence line or report on Schoolscomms including an estimation of the likely length of absence and reason for absence.

- Send in a written note with their child on the first day of return.
- Contact the school as soon as possible about any concerns they have about their child's attendance.

In return, William Harding School will:

- Contact home on the first day of absence if no message has been received.
- Follow up promptly any concerns that parents/carers have that may be affecting their child's attitude to, or feeling of wellbeing in our school.
- Regularly and consistently remind children of the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Provide the services of Family Support to assist families who are struggling to ensure their child(ren) arrive at school on time and every day.
- Complete home visits, both announced and unannounced, to ensure that the reason for absences are clarified and that the child's pace of learning isn't being affected.

4. Pupil Absence:

Parents must inform the school by 8.50am if their child is absent and give the reason for and likely duration of the absence. A message can be left on the school answerphone if no answer can be sought on the dedicated attendance line.

- The register is taken by the class teacher at the start of the school day. Any child arriving after 8.50am must report to the member of staff running 'late gate'. If a child arrives after 9.20am, they must report to the main office. Both the 'late gate' location and the main office are the single point of entry (SPOE) after 8.50am for all children entering the school.
- The registers will be checked promptly after completion to identify children who are absent without notification.
- By 9.30am we shall attempt to contact the parents of those children not in school and for whom no reasons for absence have been given.
- The school will complete home visits to all unexplained absences that day if no contact is sought.

5: Unauthorised Absence:

It is the Headteacher who determines whether or not an absence is authorised. The Headteacher may give delegated responsibility at any time to a nominated officer who may act on his/her behalf. A request form, or notification of an absence, does not automatically give authorisation.

Unauthorised absences include all unexplained or unjustified absences not relating to a child's ill-health and will include a reason not considered as authorised circumstances.

Unauthorised absence is any absence which does not fall into the following categories:

- Absence due to sickness or other unavoidable cause;
- An absence for religious observance sanctioned by the religious body to which the parents belong;
- Medical or dental appointments agreed prior to the absence (parents should seek to return their child within 30 minutes of the appointment);
- Agreed leave of absence under exceptional circumstances.

Only the school can authorise absence, not the parents, and the school is not obliged to accept the explanation offered as a valid reason.

6: Leave during term time for extended periods or holidays:

William Harding School expects all children to attend school regularly and, as such, will not authorise any extended leave or holidays during term time unless in exceptional circumstances. We expects parent to share the same commitment to learning and to plan holidays and leave during the school holidays. If, in the extreme case, parents wish to request leave in light of exceptional circumstances, they must write to the Headteacher giving at least ten school days of notice. The Headteacher will consider each application and a nominated officer within the school will respond to parents with the outcome of the application.

As a school operating under Buckinghamshire County Council, we are obliged to follow their policy with the escalation of

unauthorised absence. As a parent, you are entitled to make representation to the Headteacher using our 'exceptional circumstances form' detailing the exceptional circumstances in which your request is based upon. If the reasons for absence detailed in the request are not deemed to be exceptional, the school may refer the absence to the Local Authority and an initial Penalty Notice of £120 per parent/adult for each child, reducing to £60 for early payment could be the outcome. This would require payment being made directly to the Local Authority within 21 days.

Non-payment will mean that the Penalty notice will rise to £120 after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt. If the penalty has not been paid within 28 days of issue the Local Authority may instigate legal proceedings under section 444 (1) of the education act 1996. If found guilty of an offence under this Act, parents will receive a criminal record and could be fined up to £1000.

The school does not benefit financially from this action.

7: Lateness:

Parents are informed that the school gates open at 8:37am and the school day starts at 8.50am. Children should enter the school via one of the available doors on the school site up until 8.50am whereby the main reception door is the single point of entry.

Our Family Liaison Officers operate 'late gate' between 8.50am and 9.10am for children who arrive late to school. Children who arrive between these times will receive an 'L' on the register. The register closes at 9.20am and any child arriving after this point will be coded as 'U' – session absent.

When a child is persistently late, contact will be made with the parents/guardians and an attendance contract or punctuality plan will be put in place.

If no improvement is seen, the School will refer for support from the Local Authority.

8: Medical appointments:

Where possible, routine medical appointments should be booked for outside of the school day. In certain circumstances, where this is not possible, parents / carers should notify the school in writing or by showing the appointment letter or by telephone message of the time and date of the child's medical appointment. Children should attend school before and after the medical appointment as far as is practically possible.

9: Identification & Monitoring:

- Parents/Carers of children not in school are contacted by telephone on the first day of absence.
- If no contact is made by the first day a home visit may be undertaken.
- All verbal messages from parents are recorded centrally and the class teacher is informed.
- All verbal messages and notes from parents/carers are retained in the register.
- All parents/carers will be sent a letter if no reason is given for the absence.
- After two weeks if no reason is supplied for the absence then it will be noted as "unauthorised"

Leadership monitoring:

- The Headteacher, or a nominated officer on their behalf, checks registration procedures at least once per calendar month, to ensure consistency by all staff.
- The Governing Body is involved in target setting for the term.
- Attendance data for the whole school is presented to the Governing Body regularly.
- Reports are given to Governors concerning strategies employed and future action to be implemented for raising attendance.

10: Escalation System:

Our school target is 97% and each individual child's target is 100% attendance.

All children whose attendance falls below a nominated threshold for that individual term will be monitored weekly and will be treated as a child at risk of 'persistent absence'. Persistent absence is the official term for attendance below 90% at the end of the academic year - this may be referred to as PA.

As a school operating under Bucks County Council, we may choose to refer cases when the absence threshold is met for further investigation by the Local Authority. This could result in a fixed penalty notice being issued.

For continued attendance concerns, support will be offered to encourage the child to raise their attendance to above the school target using our staged escalation system.

- **Stage one** – parents/carers are made aware of the fall in attendance by a telephone call from the school to outline attendance concerns. Parents may receive a letter detailing the call.
- **Stage two** – a formal letter is sent to the parents/carers to outline the school’s major concerns in relation to the absence of the child. Advice will be given at this point that further absences will result in a parenting contract.
- **Stage three** – a formal parenting contract invitation is sent to the home address and a formal parenting contract meeting would be held in school to draw up formally the reasons for absence and for support to be put into place to ensure the regular attendance of the child. A home visit to conduct the meeting may take place if parents fail to attend without notice.
- **Stage four** – a formal review of the parenting contract to map any progress in the nominated period will be carried out. This meeting will be followed by three potential outcomes:
 - Attendance has improved enough and, as such, the child will be taken off the parenting contract and will be informally monitored.
 - Attendance has not improved enough, or the child would benefit from another review period, and therefore will be invited to review his or her attendance again in 4-6 weeks.
 - Attendance has continued to decline and therefore a referral to the Local Authority will be completed by the school. Parents are made aware that the Headteacher or nominated officer acting on their behalf may make a referral to the Local Authority during any point of the escalation process if they feel attendance is deteriorating at a pace which harm to the child’s education.

11: Referrals for additional support

The school may complete referrals for additional support to the Local Authority’s specialist teams in the following circumstances:

- The school has concerns in relation to safeguarding
- The absence threshold in a given period has been reached
- The school requires additional support in securing regular attendance of a child
- The escalation process has failed and targets haven’t been met
- The child is missing in education with no contact for up to 10 school days
- The school is in receipt of a request for elective home education
- Any other concerns which the Headteacher deems a referral will support the child’s learning

12: Relevant policies

- Home visit policy
- Safeguarding policy
- SEND policy