

Winchelsea



All Individuals Matter

WINCHELSEA PRIMARY SCHOOL
RUSKINGTON

ATTENDANCE POLICY

This policy has been revised to reflect changes to the statutory guidance Working together to improve school attendance.

1. Introduction/Aim

At Winchelsea Primary School we believe that regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential. We value the attendance of all pupils. Missing out on lessons leave children vulnerable to falling behind and can put them at risk of wider harm. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties at the earliest opportunity.

Our attendance policy touches all aspects of our school life and relates to our school Mission Statement.

- To provide support, advice and guidance to parents and pupils.
- To recognise the individual needs of each pupil and family with regard to attendance.

Collection and analysis of data about attendance enables the school to work towards targets set by the Department for Education (DfE) and Local Authority (LA) and to achieve this goal the school works with the LA and Carol Harrison, the school's Education Welfare Officer, to discuss attendance concerns.

2. Legal Framework

Section 7 of the 1996 Education act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special education needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. A child is of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

The government expects all schools and local authorities to:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence.
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Act early to address patterns of absence.

Parents are expected to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.

In accordance with the Education Act 1996, we will work with parents and carers and the LA to ensure that parents are supported to secure education for children of compulsory school age. Where required, we will formalise support and where necessary, work with the LA to use legal measures.

A "Parent" is defined as:

- Any natural parent, whether married or not.
- Any parent who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility as defined in the Children Act (1989) for a child or young person.

- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

At Winchelsea Primary School, we believe that improving school attendance is everyone's business. That it is shared responsibility by governors, all school staff, parents, pupils and the wider school community.

Role	Name
Senior Lead Designated Attendance Champion	Miss Helen Duckett
Staff responsible for the Management of Attendance	Mrs Ruth Rowlands
Staff with supporting roles for the Recording of Attendance	Mrs Alison McCann and Miss Kerry Brooks
Named Governor for Attendance	Mrs Estelle Drayton

The Governing Body recognises the importance of school attendance and promotes it across the school's ethos and policies. They take an active role in attendance improvement by:

- Setting high expectations of all leaders, staff, pupils and parents so that children attend school every day and are safeguarded from harm.
- Identifying a member of the governing body to lead on attendance matters and ensuring that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance.
- Ensuring school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties by rigorously evaluating the effectiveness of the school's attendance procedures so that consistent attendance support is provided for all pupils.
- Ensuring the school engages and works effectively with the local authority Attendance Team and wider local partners and services to address barriers to school attendance.
- Regularly reviewing attendance data, discussing, challenging trends and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most.
- Ensuring high aspirations are maintained for all pupils and processes for support are adapted to the individual needs of pupils including those with long term illnesses, special educational needs and disabilities, pupils from cohorts with historically lower attendance.
- Ensuring all school staff receive adequate training on attendance and that relevant staff have access to opportunities to share and learn from good practice in other schools.
- Ensuring that attendance data is shared with the local authority or Department for Education as required and on time.
- Reviewing the school's Attendance Policy on at least an annual basis, ensuring that the required resources are available to fully implement the policy.

This policy has been written in conjunction with Working Together to Improve Attendance. Please use this link [‘Working together to improve school attendance’](#) to access further information.

The Senior Leadership Team will;

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents.
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents.
- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance, with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve.
- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually.
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the Attendance Policy and adequately trained to address attendance issues.
- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resource.
- Return school attendance data to the local authority and the DfE as required and on time.
- Report the school’s attendance and related issues through termly reporting to the governors and on a half-termly basis to the lead governor for attendance.
- Ensure that systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site are implemented.
- Ensure that attendance data is collected and analysed frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence.
- Interpret the data to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.
- Develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils and their families.
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated.
- Set out how Pupil Premium will be used to support pupils with irregular attendance.

All staff will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents.
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents.
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve.
- Comply with the regulations and other relevant legislation.
- Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site.
- Ensure that registers are recorded accurately and in a timely manner.
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions.
- Work with other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils and their families.

The members of staff responsible for attendance will work to further develop relationships with families to bring

about improved attendance. This may involve seeking multi-agency support. They will support good attendance, respond to concerns and promote improvement in attendance by:

- Monitoring and analysing pupil attendance data.
- Ensuring first day calling procedures are adhered to if a child is absent from school without contact from parents.

Any concerns will be recorded on the school's safeguarding database – Child Protection Online Management System (CPOMS). This management system is an invaluable safeguarding and pastoral online tool that allows information to not only be stored securely but also to be analysed and shared quickly.

Winchelsea Primary School requests that parents:

- Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress.
- Ensure their child has regular attendance at school.
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance with the home environment.
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return, following this with a note wherever possible.
- Avoid unnecessary absences; for example, by making medical and dental appointments for outside of school hours.
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties with any aspect of their schoolwork or home and family life.
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance.
- Support the school by becoming involved in their child's education, forming a positive relationship with school and acknowledging the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home.
- Attend all meetings requested to discuss attendance issues.

Pupils will:

- Be aware of the school's Attendance Policy and when and where they are required to attend. This will be communicated to them by school staff, parents and through the school timetable.
- Speak to their class teacher or another member of staff if they are experiencing difficulties at school or at home which may impact on their attendance.
- Attend all lessons ready to learn, with the appropriate learning tools requested and on time for the class.
- Bring a note of explanation from their parents or guardians to explain an absence that has happened or is unforeseen.
- Follow the school procedure if they arrive late. This will help the school to monitor attendance and keep accurate records for the child's individual attendance. This is also vital for health and safety in the event of a school evacuation.

4. Categorising Absence and Attendance

When marking our registers, we will apply the national codes as outlined and regulated by the DfE guidance to accurately record and report attendance.

4.1 Leave of Absence

Headteachers can no longer authorise leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. All absences associated with a holiday (without exceptional circumstance) during term time will be marked as unauthorised within the register. Any parents known to have removed their child from school for the sole purpose of a holiday may be referred to the LA and be issued with a penalty notice fine or referred to the LA to consider prosecution.

We believe that children need to be in school for all sessions so that they can make the most progress possible. However, we do understand that there are times where a parent may legitimately request leave of absence for a child due to “exceptional circumstances”. Leave of absence is only granted at the discretion of the Headteacher and shall not be granted unless there are “exceptional circumstances”. The Headteacher will respond to all applications for leave of absence in writing.

Parents wishing to apply for leave of absence during term time must apply in writing to the Headteacher – current and historical attendance of 95% will be used as a benchmark to make a decision as to whether absence is granted. If a written request for leave of absence is not completed and the leave is taken without a request being submitted, the leave will not be considered by the Headteacher and it will be marked as unauthorised. The Headteacher will treat each application individually and discuss with you the circumstances of the application before a decision is made. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised. In such cases the school may make a referral to the LA to request that a penalty notice fine is issued or consider prosecution.

A penalty notice request or a referral for prosecution may be submitted to the LA should:-

- The parents fail to submit a leave of absence request in advance of taking the leave.
- An application for a leave of absence is not agreed by the Headteacher but is still taken.
- A longer period is taken more than the agreed number of days.

When absence is granted by the Headteacher, the parents will need to agree a date of return. If a pupil fails to return on the expected date and contact is not received from, or made with the parents, school will seek advice from the LA. This could result in possible children missing from education procedures being instigated.

4.2 Medical Appointments and absence due to illness

Parents should try to make appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. Where appointments during school time are unavoidable, we ask that parents notify the school in advance of the appointment. The pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment. In most

circumstances, a child should not miss a whole day at school for an appointment. No pupil will be allowed to leave the school site without parental confirmation.

In most cases, absences for illness which are reported following the school's absence reporting procedures will be authorised without the need for parents to supply medical evidence unnecessarily. In line with DfE guidance, if we do have a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness, we may ask the parent to provide medical evidence, such as a prescription, appointment card, or other appropriate form of evidence. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Where a child has an emerging pattern of non-attendance, we will discuss the reasons for absence with the child's parent/carer. We will invite parents to attend school-led Attendance Support Panel as an appropriate early intervention strategy.

Where a pupil has a verified and chronic health condition, we will aim to work with parents to ensure children have access to education and provide appropriate support. We will also consider whether an Individual Healthcare Plan is required.

4.3 Pupil Absence for the purposes of Religious Observance

Winchelsea Primary School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that, on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and is recognised as such by a relevant religious authority. Where this occurs, the school will consider either authorising the pupil absence or making special leave for religious observance. Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school.

4.4 Pupil Absence for Service Families

Winchelsea Primary School acknowledges that due to the separation and the unique obligation of Service families, taking holidays during normal school holiday periods may be difficult and we recognise that while the educational needs of the child will always be a vital factor in influencing the decision whether absence should be granted, the wider impacts on Service children and families will also be considered. Where the operational needs of the Armed Forces have prevented holidays to be taken during the allocated period, the school will consider either authorising the pupil absence or making special leave for Service Families. Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school.

4.5 Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) pupils are among the lowest achieving groups of pupils at every key stage in education, although some GRT pupils achieve very well at school. There are many complex and interwoven factors that may influence the educational attainment of GRT pupils. Schools and local authorities can make a big difference to their life chances through:

- Clear high expectation of all pupils, regardless of their background.

- An inclusive culture that welcomes all communities.
- Strong engagement from parents.

In line with The Education Act 1996, Section 444(6) the school will authorise the absence of a pupil of no fixed abode who is unable to attend school because:

- The parent is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require him to travel from place to place.
- That the child has attended at a school as a registered pupil as regularly as the nature of that trade or business permits.
- If the child has attained the age of six, that he has made at least 200 attendance during the period of 12 months ending with the date on which the proceedings were instituted.

This provision applies *only* when the family are engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits. In these circumstances, parents have a duty to ensure that their children are receiving suitable education when not at school.

When a family is trading or otherwise conducting their business in or around the local area, if a family can reasonably travel back to their base school (see below) then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time. Winchelsea Primary School will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when he or she is not travelling. However, the pupil must have attended school in the last 18 months. Parents can register their children at other schools temporarily while away from their base school; in such cases, the pupil's school place at Winchelsea Primary School will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance.

To ensure we can effectively support all our pupils, we ask that parents:

- Advise the school of their forthcoming travelling patterns as soon as these are known and before they happen.
- Inform the school regarding proposed return dates.

4.6 Unauthorised Absence

Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and it is accepted as such by the school. The decision to authorise absences is at the discretion of the Headteacher. Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include but are not limited to:

- A pupil's/family member's birthday.
- Shopping for uniforms.
- Arrangements or appointments for cutting the pupil's hair.
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes.
- An unwillingness to attend school, or inability to attend owing to inadequate personal/family organisation.
- A refusal to attend school on health grounds but where the pupil is considered well enough to attend.
- Holidays taken without the authorisation of the school.

5 Our Procedures

5.1 Register Keeping and Recording

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended by 2016 regulations, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session. The register must record whether the pupil was:

- Present.
- Absent.
- Present at approved educational activity or
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

For the purpose of this policy, the school defines:

“Absence” as:

- Arrival at school after the register has closed.
- Not attending school for any reason.

“Regular” attendance as:

- Attendance at every session the school is open to pupils unless their absence has been authorised.

An “authorised absence” as:

- An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave.
- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time, for which the school has granted leave.
- Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave.
- An absence due to a family emergency or unavoidable cause.

An “unauthorised absence” as:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Arrival at school after the register has closed.
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed.
- Leaving school for no reason during the day.

Attendance is supported in the following ways:

- Accurate completion of the registers at the beginning of each session (9.00 am and 1.00 pm) and within 30 minutes of the start of the session.
- Attendance checks in the morning daily, by the office team, and at other appropriate times, such as the

end of term analysis or for Governors' meetings.

- First day calling for unexplained absence and home visits for any absence causing concern.
- Recording of good attendance on individual End of Academic Year Reports.
- An Attendance Concern letter may be raised if attendance falls below 90% OR is on a consistent decline.
- Identifying and supporting pupils who have attendance problems, including the sharing of relevant information with a destination school or other agencies.
- Class teachers will arrange meetings with those parents who are concerned that their children may be experiencing difficulty in attending school and work to resolve the issues. This may lead to further support from the Head teacher/SENCO – Pastoral Wellbeing Mentor.
- RM Unify/Integris G2 system is used to provide valuable year group, class and pupil level attendance data, which enables speedy analysis and timely responses by the Head teacher and SEND team.

5.2 Late Arrival at School

All pupils are expected to arrive on time for every day of the school year. The school gates open at 08.45 am. The school register will be taken at 09.00 am. All pupils arriving after this time are required to report to the main office and provide a reason for their absence. If their arrival is before 09.30 am it will be recorded as late - L code (Late before the close of register).

The school register will officially close at 09.30 am. All pupils arriving on or after this time will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning session - U code (Late after the close of register). This is categorised as an unauthorised absence for the session. Parents will be contacted to discuss any patterns of late arrival. Repeated arrival after the close of registration will result in appropriate interventions being instigated and may also result in a penalty notice being issued or prosecution. The school register will be taken again at 1.00 pm. The registers will close at 1.30 pm. L or U codes will also be used if a pupil arrives after the close of the afternoon register.

5.3 Expected absence procedure for parents

A parent has a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school regularly. If a child is unavoidably absent from school parents are expected to contact school by telephone call on the morning of the first day of absence and on each subsequent day, identifying the reason for absence and the expected date of return. If no contact is received, then absence protocols will be instigated.

If a child is absent, the following actions will be initiated by the school:

- If a note or telephone call is not received from parents, the parents will be contacted on the first day of absence by telephone – please ensure that school has more than one emergency contact number.
- Absences messages will be put on the RM Unify/Integris G2 registers and any 'paper' messages retained in the Attendance folder.
- Where there is no response a text message will be sent to the 1st named parent.
- Where there is no response or contact made, a home visit after 3 days of no contact from the Head teacher or her nominee may be necessary.
- Where non-attendance continues, the class teacher will discuss with the Head teacher and further action planned.

In certain circumstances the school may also:

- Visit the home of the pupil.
- Write to the parents of a pupil to highlight attendance or punctuality issues.
- Invite parents to discuss how school can support the family to make improvement.
- Refer to an external agency/support service to offer support, guidance, and advice.
- Refer to the LA for joint enquiries to be made to establish the whereabouts of the child through [Children Missing Education procedures](#) (after 5 days of unexplained absence).
- Refer to the LA to consider issuing a penalty notice or to consider prosecution when all other interventions have failed, or an unauthorised leave of absence has been taken.
- Refer the matter to an appropriate external agency for multi-agency support, such as implementing a Family Support Plan or consulting with the Children's Advice and Duty Service (CADS) or the police, where there are safeguarding concerns.

5.4 Support Systems

Winchelsea Primary School recognise that poor attendance can be an indication of difficulties in a family's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents are encouraged to inform school of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, emerging health concerns. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

We also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance. The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance based on the individual needs and circumstances of the child.

To plan the correct support, we will always invite parents and pupils to attend a meeting to discuss the concerns and devise a plan to support the child's regular attendance. Support offered to families will be child-centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils.

5.5 Persistent Absence and the use of legal interventions

In England, good attendance at school is 95%+ for the academic year. Lincolnshire County Council class **persistent absence** as 10% of the academic year (including both authorised and unauthorised absences combined). RM Unify/Integris G2 will be checked on a regular basis to ensure that any pupils "at risk" of persistent absence are highlighted early rather than waiting. If a child's absence is a cause for concern, a meeting will initially be requested with the parent and then a School Attendance Panel (SAP) will be called to ensure that the school and the family are actively working together to address the issue. An action plan will be drawn up and agreed by both parties and a timescale for improvement will be set.

If attendance does not improve, further warning notices will be issued and further action will be taken, possibly resulting in court action being taken. Parents found guilty in a Magistrates' Court of failing to secure their child's regular attendance at school under the provisions of the Education Act 1996, will receive a criminal record and a maximum penalty of a £1,000 fine under a Section 444 (1) offence or a £2,500 fine or up to a 3-month prison sentence, under a Section 444 (1a) offence.

Appendix 1 – Fixed penalty notice whole school warning letter

Dear Parent

Attendance at school and legal intervention

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly.

[Research](#) commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) shows missing school for even a day can mean a child is less likely to achieve good grades, which can have a damaging effect on their life chances. At Winchelsea Primary School our aim is to work with parents to ensure that all our pupils receive the most from their education and reach their full potential.

This letter is to remind all parents about the law that requires them to ensure that their child attends school regularly. The Government is very clear that no child should miss school apart from in exceptional circumstances and schools must take steps to reduce absence to support children's attainment.

The DfE policy document entitled, '[Working together to improve school attendance](#)' states:

- Only exceptional circumstances warrant a leave of absence. Schools should consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.
- If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the Head teacher to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school.
- As Head teachers should only grant leaves of absence in exceptional circumstances it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

If the school does not receive a request for leave, the Head teacher will be unable to consider your individual circumstances and the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. There will be no obligation on the Head teacher to reconsider authorising the leave if an application has not been made in advance.

The Local Authority (LA) operates a system where any pupil will meet the criteria for legal intervention if they have **at least 9 sessions (4.5 school days) lost to unauthorised absence by the pupil during 6 school weeks**. The intervention could be in the form of a fixed penalty notice. Any pupil at Winchelsea Primary School who meets the criteria, will be referred to the LA for action to be considered.

If a fixed penalty notice is issued, the arrangement for the payment will be detailed on the notice. The penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. A parent may receive more than one separate penalty notice resulting from unauthorised absence. When penalty notices are issued each parent will receive one per child. Therefore, each parent could receive multiple notices if they have more than 1 child who has been absent. You should be aware that failure to pay the total amount within the timescale will result in legal action being taken. In some circumstances, the Lincolnshire County Council Attendance Team may choose not to issue a further penalty notice in the same academic year and may instead choose to prosecute a parent under the Education Act 1996 Section 444. There is no right of appeal by parents against a fixed penalty notice.

I hope we can count on your support in this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely

Appendix 2 - For holidays during term time

Dear

Fixed Penalty Formal Warning

Name of child or young person:

Date of birth:

Pupil registered at:

This letter is a Fixed Penalty Formal Warning and is being sent to you because you have requested a period of absence from school for your child during term time.

The period you have requested from (date) to (date), is not deemed to be exceptional circumstances and therefore will be coded as unauthorised absence. If you choose to ignore this warning, a fixed penalty notice will be issued for the above period of absence.

A fixed penalty notice is a strategy used by schools to address the unacceptable levels of attendance of children attending their school under the following legal framework:

- Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 places upon parents a duty to ensure that their child receives efficient full-time education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise
- Where a child is a registered pupil at a school and the parent fails to ensure that child's regular attendance at school the parent is liable to be prosecuted for a criminal offence under Section 444 of the Education Act
- In cases where this duty is not being fulfilled Section 4448 of the same Act empowers the Local Authority to issue a fixed penalty of either £60 or £120.

Should you wish to discuss this matter further, please contact the school on the above contact details.

Yours sincerely