Attendance Policy



Date: November 2026

Review: November 2027

WILLINGTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

Willington Primary School

Attendance Policy

Attendance Key Contacts

Please find the details of those with overall responsibility for attendance, attendance support and attendance improvement within our school below.

Name	Role	Contact details
Mrs Harker	Head Teacher	T: 01388 746414 E: willington@durhamlearning.net
Mrs Britton	Deputy Headteacher / Senior Attendance Champion	
Mrs Exton	Office Manager	
Miss Sherwood/ Mrs Howie	Office Staff	
Mrs Morton	Governor with responsibility for attendance	

If a pupil is going to be absent from school the parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence by 8:55am, or as soon as practically possible by contacting the school office.

Office Contact Details:

Admin/Office Staff	Telephone: 01388 746414
WhatsApp	WhatsApp: 07766 510933
E-mail	E-mail: willington@durhamlearning.net
Arbor	Parent Message
School Whatsapp:	07774334621

If a pupil, parent or family is having difficulty with attending school and requires advice, help or support then they can contact:

Name	Role / type of help	Contact details
Admin/office Staff Mrs Exton Miss Sherwood Mrs Howie	• General enquiries • Advice about illness incubation periods. • Day-to-day attendance contact	Telephone: 01388 746414 E-mail: Willington@durhamlearning.net
Attendance Champion/ Deputy Headteacher Mrs Britton	• Provide support to families and pupils • Establish and maintain effective systems of attendance management. • Help to overcome barriers to attendance. • Signposting to external services. • Safeguarding checks.	Telephone: 01388 746414 E-mail: Willington@durhamlearning.net

Assistant Headteacher/ SENDCO Mrs Barnett	• Provide support to families and pupils • Provide support for children with a medical need. • Help to overcome barriers to attendance.	Telephone: 01388 746414 E-mail: Willington@durhamlearning.net
Class teacher	• General advice • Support in the classroom	Please contact your child's class teacher via our DoJo app or telephone: 01388 746414

Help & Support

Where help or support is needed with attendance the sooner school know about this, the quicker people can work together to support with this. Where needed this can involve other services to make sure that pupils and their families get the right support, at the right time from the right people.

Children Missing from Education

If pupil's whereabouts are not known, following enquiries schools can legally remove pupils from the admission register (the school roll) after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. It is **vital that parents keep school informed of any change of details** and regularly update them if details change. Pupils place in schools are at risk if whereabouts are not known. Children Missing from Education must be reported to the Local Authority and the matter may be treat as a safeguarding issue.

Introduction to our school attendance vision and ethos

Willington Primary School seeks to ensure that all of its pupils receive an education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise his/her true potential. The school will strive to provide a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn within a culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.

Regular school attendance plays a vital role in children's wellbeing and their education, ensuring that their current learning needs are being met but also building their future ability to learn.

As attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils', improving attendance is everyone's business, a concerted effort across all teaching and nonteaching staff in school, the trust or governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, the school and partners will work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

Specific roles and responsibilities have been published in the Working Together to improve school attendance statutory guidance.

We recognise the link between regular attendance and the well-being, development and achievement of our students / pupils. We expect everyone to attend every session they are able to, to benefit from the learning and pastoral opportunities and support we offer.

Communication is vital to ensure we are able to work with our parents and pupils and support attendance.

We ask that parents check the contact details, address and emergency contact information held by the school are up-to-date are communicated to school as soon as possible as it is extremely important school can contact parents in an emergency, keep parents informed of events and progress or discuss any concerns at the earliest opportunity.

The school day

- At Willington Primary School, our staff meet and greet our pupils at the school entrance. This begins at 8:45am each day for all children (reception through to year 6).
- We operate a 'soft start'- doors are open for 10 minutes at the beginning of the school day (from 8:45- 8:55) to allow pupils time to arrive and settle in class.
- Attendance registers are taken twice once at the start of each morning session and once at the start of each afternoon session.

Start and Finish Times

	Start Time	Entry Point	Finish Time	Exit Point
Early Years	8:45am	Nursery/Reception door	3:05pm	Nursery/Reception door
Years 1 and 2	8:45am	Key Stage 1 door	3:15pm	Key Stage 1 door
Year 3	8:45am	Key Stage 2 door	3:15pm	Key Stage 1 door
Years 4, 5 & 6	8:45am	Key Stage 2 door	3:15pm	Key Stage 2 door

Registration is at 8:55am. The register will close at 9:05am. Pupils must be in school to be marked present, otherwise another appropriate code will be used.

Pupils arriving late for registration, but before the register has closed will be recorded as late (L code).

In line with government guidance the registers will close at 9:20am. Pupils who are not present before the register closes but attend during the session will be recorded as a U code unless the reason means another code is more appropriate. The U code is an unauthorised absence.

Arriving late to school can be disruptive and unsettling to the child and the rest of their class. Parents should contact the school office if there are any issues which are affecting a pupil's ability to attend school on time.

If your child is late for school:

All children arriving late at school will be asked the reason for their lateness and this will be recorded on our Arbor system. If a child is late (after registers close) for school on a number of occasions, parents/ carers will be contacted, and a letter will be sent out.

If the school continues to have concerns about a child's punctuality

If concerns about punctuality continue, parents/ carers will be contacted by a member of the attendance team who will discuss with you the barriers to attending school on time as well as offer support. If lateness is marked as unauthorised, this could result in a referral to the Local Authority.

Term dates and planned Inset days

Terms dates and planned inset days are published on the school website here:
https://www.willington.durham.sch.uk/parents/school-term-dates

Leave of Absence in Term Time

Head teachers are expected to restrict leave of absence in term-time to the specific circumstances in regulation 11 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. There is discretion to consider exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts, circumstances and

background behind the request. Permission must be requested in advance by a parent the pupil normally lives with completing the form by completing the leave of absence form (obtained from the school office).

Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school.

A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion. If an application is not made for leave then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised regardless of circumstances.

The DfE have stated that generally they do not consider the need or desire for a holiday or other absence for leisure or recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.

On the first day of absence

If a pupil is to be absent for any reason, parents or carers are asked to contact the school by telephone (01388 746414) providing a reason for the absence. If a pupil is absent from school and there is no contact from parents/carers then school will contact home to find out why the pupil not in school.

Appointments should be made outside of school time where possible. If this is not possible, your child should miss the minimum amount of school time necessary. If they are well enough to come back to school following the appointment they should do.

Periods of extended absence

If a child is expected to be absent for an extended period of time, parents/carers should inform the school on the first day of absence and then update school every 3 days.

No reason for absence provided

If there is no contact from home, school will try to contact all other emergency contacts on file. If unsuccessful, school may carry out a home visit to check on the welfare of a child. If the school do not receive a reason for any absence, it will be recorded as unauthorised. Regular absence and unauthorised absences could result in more formal action.

Where 10 or more unauthorised absences are recorded in any 10-school week period the school must consider whether a penalty notice may be appropriate and if so will refer the matter to the local authority.

Absence authorisation

The High Court has confirmed that the school's Head Teacher authorises absences. In some circumstances, the school may request that parent's provide medical evidence to support absences.

We want to support all our pupils to ensure they can access their education and will take a support first approach. This will sometimes require communications and conversations to better understand the circumstances which may lead to absence.

Promoting good attendance and punctuality

Willington Primary School is committed to carry out the following in order to promote good school attendance:

- Submit a daily attendance return to the Department of Education, in line with the legal expectations placed on all schools;
- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families;
- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters, Facebook/ Dojo, website and letters home
- Promote the benefits of high attendance to pupils through assemblies
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absences
- Celebrate excellent attendance by displaying and reporting individual and class achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance.

Attendance data

At Willington Primary School, we rigorously analyse attendance data on a fortnightly basis to ensure that individual families are identified early, and support is offered. Analysis also takes place for cohorts and specific groups on a half termly basis. This analysis will be used to look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence to identify barriers and develop strategies.

Attendance features on all SLT agendas, Pupil Progress discussions and regular attendance concerns are alerted to staff members to ensure they can facilitate discussions with families. Senior leaders will also use data to monitor the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them an inform future strategies.

We will use data we have such as whole school, year group, form/class and individual pupil level to analyse for patterns of absence which may require some support to improve.

We will also consider different pupil cohorts such as all pupils, those who have free school meals, those with special educational needs or disabilities, pupil premium, children who have a social worker or are looked after etc to identify where additional support may be required.

We will use the information to inform what we do to support and aid discussions between staff, pupils and families.

We will monitor the data to understand the impact of what we do.

We will communicate information to parents/carers, staff and other professionals such as Early help and support from the Family Hub.

Absence concerns

Parents may identify concerns about school attendance early if there is a change in child's attitude to school or in their willingness to attend. If this is the case, concerns should be shared with school so people can work together to ensure that school attendance does not decline. The earlier concerns are identified and shared, the quicker they may be resolved.

Persistent absence

Pupils who miss 10% or more of their sessions at school are persistently absent. Letters will be sent home when attendance is becoming a concern so that parents are kept updated. We will also inform parents/ carers when your child becomes persistently absent (attendance 90% or below) and you will be invited into school for a meeting so we can see what support can put into place.

Severe absence

Pupils who miss 50% or more of their sessions at school are severely absent. School will work with pupils, parents, partner services and agencies to provide additional support through a more formal, planned approach in conjunction with the Local Authority.

National framework for penalty notices and other legal intervention

To improve consistency of practice across the country there is a national framework for penalty notices.

At the point where there are 10 unauthorised absence sessions recorded in any 10 school-week period, schools must consider if:

- further support is appropriate.
- support is appropriate but is not being engaged with.
- support is appropriate but is not improving attendance.
- support is not needed, such as in cases of term-time leave of absence.

If support is appropriate, this should continue.

If support is appropriate but is not improving attendance or is not being engaged with, then a referral for consideration of legal intervention should be made to the local authority. This can include, but is not limited to a Notice to Improve, an application for an Education Supervision Order, Penalty Notice or Offence investigation Interview (PACE caution).

If support is not appropriate, such as where a holiday in term-time has taken place, a referral for a penalty notice will be made. (DCC - Penalty Notice Code of Conduct)

Penalty notices offer the opportunity to deal with an irregular attendance offence without the need to go to court. Penalty notices are issued at a rate of £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.

There is an escalation policy which means that if a second notice is issued within a three-year period, the second notice will only be payable at the rate of £160. Further offences will not be eligible for the offer of a penalty notice and parents may be prosecuted in court. (DCC - Penalty Notice Leaflet)

If penalty notices are not paid then a prosecution for the original irregular attendance offence will take place.

If convicted at court under section 444 of the Education Act for failing to secure the regular attendance of a registered pupil at school, a parent may be fined up to £1000 for each offence.
If there is evidence that a parent knowingly failed to secure the attendance and there is no reasonable justification for this, they can be fined up to £2500 and/or face up to 3 months in prison, be subject to probation supervision or have a curfew imposed as maximum sentences.

Pupils with specific needs
We understand that some pupils may have additional needs which make attendance more challenging for them and/or their families. Our main aim is to support families to achieve good attendance for our pupils and we are mindful of the Equality Act 2010. At all times we will work with families and external agencies where appropriate to provide appropriate support. This may include providing work to be completed at home when a child is unable to attend or may include liaising with the Home and Hospital team to ensure appropriate work can be set.

This policy is supported by our policies on:

- Safeguarding
- Behaviour
- Antibullying
- Special Education Needs
- Pupils with medical conditions

APPENDIX 1

The school and all partners will work together to:

EXPECT

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

MONITOR

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

FACILITATE SUPPORT

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

FORMALISE SUPPORT

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.

ENFORCE

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

Expect

Statement of expectation –

We all want the best for pupils and therefore aspire to have the highest attendance possible for each individual to allow them to access the education on offer to them in a culture they feel safe, part of the community and where they want to be.

Monitor

Statement of how data will be used to monitor, identify and support attendance to enable school to address concerns at the earliest opportunity using a support first approach.

Listening to and understanding barriers to attendance

Statement of who is available in school to listen to any concerns which may be affecting attendance, or who will who will communicate with parents where concerns are identified by school. This should acknowledge attendance is everyone's responsibility and led by the Senior Attendance Champion from the school leadership team.

Facilitate support

Set out how the school intends to remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school and that this might include an early help or whole family plan where there are wider issues affecting attendance.

Set out the school's strategy for reducing persistent and severe absence, including how access to wider support services will be provided to remove the barriers to attendance and when support will be formalised in conjunction with the local authority.

Formalise support

Explain that where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners will work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Explain that, depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance contract.

Enforce

Explain that where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, attendance may be enforced where necessary through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

Willington Primary School

Should I keep my child off school?

Yes, until...

Chicken Pox (Until all blisters have crusted over).
Vomiting and Diarrhoea (Return 48 hours from the last episode).
Flu-like temperature (Until they no longer have a high temperature).
Impetigo (Until their sores have crusted and healed, or 48 hours after they started antibiotics).
Measles (4 days after the rash first appeared).
Mumps (5 days after the swelling started).
Scabies (Until they've had their first treatment).
Scarlet Fever (24 hours after they started taking antibiotics).
Whooping Cough (48 hours after they started taking antibiotics).

No, but inform your child's class teacher of:

Cough/ cold
Sore throat (keep off school if accompanied by a high temperature)
Earache
Head lice
Hand, foot and mouth
Threadworms
Glandular Fever
Slapped Cheek
Tonsilitis
Conjunctivitis
Cold sores

Fixed Penalty Notices for irregular attendance at school

Important information for parents

1 Overview

Penalty notices are issued as an alternative to prosecution where parents have failed to ensure their child attends school regularly. They can be used in cases where absence has not been authorised by a head teacher.

The notices are used to prevent the need for court action, for example, when support has not been engaged with or is not appropriate (for example, leave of absence during term time). **Changes from September 2024 are shown below.**

2 Leave

Head Teachers are unable to grant leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances.**

Generally, a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation **would not** constitute an exceptional circumstance.

3 Absence

A Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued if there are **5 days / 10 sessions** of absence in a period of **10 school weeks** (where absence has not been authorised).

A notice may be issued where the 5-day level of absence has not been reached, for example, if there are several periods of leave.

4 Amount

Within a 3-year period:

The first penalty notice is **£160** if paid within 28 days, reduced to **£80** if paid within 21 days.

A second penalty notice is **£160** to be paid within 28 days.

A third penalty notice cannot be issued. **Legal action** may result (for example, prosecution).

For further information please see Durham County Council website page on school attendance or email AIT@durham.gov.uk