



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

WILLIAM HARDING SCHOOL

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Head Teacher: Miss T Cotchin BA(Hons) PGCE NPQH



08 September 2022

Dear parents and carers,

Re: Working together to improve school attendance – updated guidance from the Department for Education

As you may be aware, the Department for Education has updated their guidance in relation to school attendance. The published guidance contains clear actions which must be taken by schools, local authorities, governing bodies, and parents.

The government recognise that children cannot succeed in school if they do not regularly attend, and therefore are now mandating that all children attend school each day unless a statutory reason applies.

We are choosing to notify you of these changes made by the Department for Education as they may affect you directly. As you know, we always seek to update you whenever we receive new guidance.

The new guidance states that parents should:

- Ensure their child attends every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies.
- Notify the school as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent (e.g. sickness).
- Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance.
- Book any medical appointments around the school day where possible.

As a school, we are required to:

- Expect high standards of attendance.
- Monitor attendance patterns.
- Listen and understand to parents and children to identify the barriers to attendance.
- Facilitate support to ensure parents and children can improve attendance.
- Formalise support when voluntary support is not working.
- Enforce attendance through statutory intervention when other avenues have been exhausted by referring for additional help from the local authority.

Our School Values are: Inclusion, Perseverance, Honesty, Respect, Responsibility and Collaboration.



The Department for Education expect that parents will:

- Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child’s barriers to attendance.
- Proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.

School specific provision:

We always ensure we publish our planned systems for monitoring attendance in advance to ensure full transparency with parents.

Our system of intervention for the academic year 2022/2023 is as follows:

Stage	Threshold	Intervention
1	7 sessions Voluntary Intervention	A phone call home will be made to notify you of our attendance concern. This will allow you to have a conversation with a member of staff about your child’s attendance. We are more than happy to discuss any concerns you have no matter how small.
2	14 sessions Voluntary Intervention	A letter home is sent to notify parents of our continued concerns. This letter will contain information relating to your child’s absences and will signpost support to increase attendance.
3	21 sessions Statutory Intervention	All adults with parental responsibility will be invited into school for a formal parenting contract meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to formally identify any barriers leading to the poor attendance of your son/daughter. Targets will be set during this meeting which will be reviewed in 4-6 weeks.
4	When required Statutory Intervention	A referral will be made to the local authority for statutory support in the event of continued low attendance. If our support system does not lead to an increase in attendance, we will seek further support from the local authority. The local authority will seek to identify formally the barriers to attendance and the support provided by the school. It is important to be aware that they may take further action if they feel absences were not for a statutory reason.

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During processes 1-4, cases are reviewed continuously on an individual basis. We use our ‘intervention matrix’ to provide rapid additional specific provision in all cases. This includes referrals to partner agencies for additional support.

Punctuality to school

It is expected that all children will arrive through their designated gate by 8.40am.

Reception	8:30-8:40 – Honeysuckle and Buttercup 8:40-8:50 – Bluebell and Daffodil
Year 1	8:30-8:40
Year 2	8:40-8:50
Year 3	8:40-8:45 Rowan Hawthorn 8:45-8:50 Willow and Beech
Year 4	8:30-8:35 Osborne and Ascott 8:35-8:40 Waddesdon and Blenheim
Year 5	8:50-9:00
Year 6	8:40-8:50

Gates are staffed from 8:30am by key members of staff.

Staff are always on hand to welcome children into school, staff can easily be identified by their red coats or hi-vis jackets.

All children arriving after the gates have been closed must report to the main entrance – our single point of entry and speak with the member of the FLO team conducting late-gate.

We track and monitor on a weekly basis all late marks. It is important that all parents are aware of the following:

- A late arrival after the registers have been closed is coded as a U. This counts as a session of absence.
- Where a child is late multiple times each term, we will contact you to offer additional support to ensure they arrive at school in good time each morning.

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Holidays in term time

If you wish to request leave of absence during term time, you should complete our 'exceptional circumstances' form and return it to the office in good time for processing.

All requests are reviewed by the Headteacher and will be scrutinised in line with our policy

You will always be notified of the outcome of your request. Please note you can only request leave in exceptional circumstances, and you will be asked to identify the exceptional circumstances when completing the form.

If your request is not authorised and meets the local authority's threshold, we are dutybound to notify them and they may choose to issue a fixed penalty notice payable direct to them. Please note that the school does not benefit financially from this action. If you do not request leave prior to your child's absence, this will be unauthorised.

Absence

There are two categories of absence, authorised and unauthorised absences. Authorised absences are absences whereby the school supports a child missing school. A full list of the absences we permit can be found in our policy.

It is important that we know where all children are when they are due to be in school. As a school, we must ensure the welfare of all children is considered before authorising an absence. We know all parents share this same commitment.

Our absence processes are as follows:

- To notify us of an absence, please contact the school before 8.30am on each day of absence. We may call you back to discuss the absence further.
- Absence can be reported either via the absence line 01296 421733 (option 1) or email: attendance@williamharding.school. (Please do not email the main office.)
- If we don't hear from parents, home visits take place to ensure the safeguarding and welfare of all children.
- When your child returns to school, their class teacher will welcome them back and is on hand to discuss any concerns you may have.
- Where a child must leave site for a medical appointment, we would expect them to attend either side of the appointment and be absent for no longer than two hours where possible, a copy of the appointment slip must be provided.

Thank you once again for your continued support. If you have any further questions or require any further information, please contact our Family Liaison Team.

Kind regards,

Mrs Bone

Lead Family Liaison Officer

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