



**Wilbraham Primary School**

**Attendance**

**Policy**

# Attendance Policy

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## **1. Introduction:**

- 1.1 The Governors, pupils, parents/carers and staff of Wilbraham Primary School believe that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.
- 1.2 Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential.
- 1.3 There are clear links between poor attendance and poor attainment.
- 1.4 Wilbraham Primary School values all pupils. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties. Every day a student misses school, a total of 5 hours of learning is lost.
- 1.5 It is recognised that attending school regularly can be a protective factor for children and young people. Poor school attendance is a recurrent theme in families where there are Safeguarding concerns.
- 1.6 References issued by staff at Wilbraham Primary School to high schools, housing associations, departments for visa renewals, etc. contain a brief summary of the attendance record of the pupil concerned. This is because good attendance and punctuality are life skills which are among the indicators of reliability which institutions draw upon in evaluations.

## **2. Legal Framework:**

- 2.1 Wilbraham Primary School recognises that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding and behaviour. This policy also takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Race Relations Act 2000.
- 2.2 Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents/carers must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- 2.3 A child is of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their 5<sup>th</sup> 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.
- 2.4 Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents/carers secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.
- 2.5 The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, 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 student was:
  - present;
  - absent;
  - present at an approved educational activity; or
  - unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

### 3. Categorising Absence:

- 3.1 Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. Absence can only be authorised by the school and cannot be authorised by parents/carers. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.
- 3.2 Parents/carers must advise the school by telephone on the first day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return. This should be followed up in the form of a written note from the parent/carer, though verbal explanations may be acceptable where this is considered appropriate. Alternative arrangements will be agreed with non-English speaking parents/carers.
- 3.3 Absence will be categorised as follows:
- **Illness:** Parents/carers may be asked to provide medical evidence to allow the Headteacher to authorise absence where appropriate. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription, etc.
  - **Medical/Dental Appointments:** Parents/carers are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils must attend school for part of the day. Parents/carers must show the appointment card to school.
  - **Other Authorised Circumstances:** This relates to where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances.
  - **Excluded (No alternative provision made):** Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher will make arrangements for work to be sent home.
- 3.4 **Leave of Absences:** Parents/carers who need to take their child out of school during term time due to exceptional circumstances must send a written request to the Headteacher. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised. All requests for leave of absence will be responded to in writing outlining the conditions of leave granted.
- 3.5 If a pupil fails to return and contact with the parents/carers has not been made or received, school may take the pupil off the school's roll. This means that the child will lose their school place.
- 3.6 If leave is granted, the parent/carer will agree with the school the date the student will return to school. If this does not occur and the parent/carer contacts the school to state that due to unforeseen circumstances e.g. continual illness of relative the child cannot return to school, the parent/carer needs to be aware that the pupil may be removed from the school roll and the attendance register on the 21<sup>st</sup> day of absence. The parent/carer also needs to be warned that if they do not return on the agreed date, the whole period of absence including the period of agreed authorised absence will be recorded as unauthorised. The school will advise the parent to enrol the child in a school where they are staying as they are now choosing to reside for an undetermined or lengthy period in an area where it is unreasonable for the child to travel to Wilbraham Primary School. This is in compliance with the Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2013 and the CME guidance, March 2016.
- 3.7 If parents/carers take unauthorised leave of absence and the school have evidence that suggests the child is living somewhere where it is not reasonable to travel to Wilbraham Primary School, they will expect the child to be educated where they are residing and the child may be removed from the admissions roll and the attendance register 20 days from the 1<sup>st</sup> day of unauthorised absence.

- 3.8 If the permission to take leave is not granted and the parent/carer takes their child out of school, the absence will be **unauthorised**. In such cases the school may request the local authority issue a Penalty Notice or consider other legal sanctions including prosecution in the Magistrates' Court.
- 3.9 **Religious Observance:** Wilbraham 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 this necessitates a consideration by written request by the parent/carer of authorised absence.
- 3.10 It is reasonable for a parent/carer to allow their children not to attend school on any day of religious observance if recognised by the parent/carer's religious body. Parents/carers are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent.
- 3.11 However, in the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of the school, it is identified as reasonable that no more than one day be designated for any individual occasion of religious observance/festival and no more than three days in total in any academic year. Any further absence will be categorised as unauthorised.
- 3.12 **Traveller Absence:** It is expected that Traveller children, in common with all other children, attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible. To protect Traveller parents/carers from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944 Section 86, states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in a year. This is 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.
- 3.13 When in or around Manchester, if a family can reasonably travel back to their Base School (see below) then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time. Wilbraham Primary School will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when they are not travelling. However, the student must have attended in the last 18 months. Traveller children can register at other schools temporarily while away from their base school, in such cases, the pupil's school place at Wilbraham 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.
- 3.14 Wilbraham Primary School can only effectively operate as the child's base school if it is engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parents/carers must:
- advise of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen; and
  - inform the school regarding proposed return dates.
- 3.15 Wilbraham Primary School will authorise absence of Traveller children if we are satisfied that a family is travelling and has given indication that they intend to return. Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:
- the child is on roll and attending another visited school.
  - undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another Local Authority's Traveller Education Service.
  - the child is undertaking computer based distance learning that is time evidenced.
- 3.16 Where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as that for any pupil and appropriate statutory action may be undertaken.

- 3.17 **Late Arrival:** Registration begins at 8:55am, pupils arriving after this time will be marked as present but arriving late. The register will close at 9:30am. Pupils arriving after the close of register will be recorded as late, this will not be authorised and will count as an absence for that school session and statutory action may be taken where appropriate.
- 3.18 On arrival after the start of registration, pupils must immediately report to the school office to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school. The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment. The absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** if the pupil has arrived late without justifiable cause.
- 3.19 **Unauthorised Absence:** Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the Headteacher.
- 3.20 Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:
- a pupil's/family member's birthday.
  - shopping for uniforms.
  - having their hair cut.
  - closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes.
  - "couldn't get up".
  - illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school.
  - unauthorised Leave of Absence.

#### **4. Removing a pupil from the Attendance Register:**

- 4.1 In accordance with the Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2013, pupils will only be deleted from the register when one of the following circumstances applies:
- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order.
  - The School Attendance Order is revoked by the Local Authority.
  - The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age.
  - Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed.
  - Death of a pupil.
  - Transfer between schools.
  - Pupil withdrawn to be educated outside the school system.
  - Failure to return from an extended leave of absence after both the school and the Local Authority have tried to locate the pupil.
  - A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age.
  - In custody for more than four months (in discussion with The Youth Offending Team).
  - 20 days continuous unauthorised absence and both the Local Authority and school have tried to locate the pupil.
  - Left the school but not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the Local Authority have tried to locate the pupil.
- 4.2 Wilbraham Primary School will follow Manchester City Council's Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.

## **5. Roles and Responsibilities:**

Wilbraham Primary School believes that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents/carers, pupils and the wider school community.

### **5.1 The Governing Body will:**

- Ensure that the importance and value of good attendance is promoted to pupils and their parents/carers.
- Annually review the school's Attendance Policy and ensure the require recourses are available to fully implement the policy.
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation is complied with.
- Agree school attendance targets and where appropriate, link these to the Performance Management of Senior Leadership within the school.
- Monitor the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting at Governing Body Meetings.
- Ensure the attendance data is reported to the Local Authority or Department for Education as required and on time.
- Ensure that there is a named Senior Leader for Attendance.
- Ensure that the school has clear systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site.
- Ensure that there are procedures for collecting and analysing attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence.
- Ensure that data is understood and used to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.

### **5.2 The Leadership Team will:**

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents/carers.
- 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 the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation is complied with.
- Return school attendance data to the Local Authority and the Department for Education as required and on time.
- Report the school's attendance and related issues through half termly reporting to the Governing Body.
- Ensure that systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all students, 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 or interventions.
- Develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support students and their families.

- Document interventions used to a standard required by the Local Authority should legal proceedings be instigated.

### 5.3 **All Staff will:**

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to students and their parents/carers.
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents/carers.
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all students to attend and to achieve.
- Comply with the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation.
- Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site.
- Analyse attendance data to identify causes and patterns of absence.
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions.
- Work with other agencies 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.

### 5.4 **We request that Parents/Carers will:**

- Talk to their child about school and what goes on there. Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress.
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment.
- Encourage their child to look to the future and have aspirations.
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return. Follow this up with a note where possible.
- Try to avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible, make appointments for the doctors, dentist, etc. outside of school hours.
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties.
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance.
- Support the school; take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home.
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bed times, homework, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before.
- Not keep their child off school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family.
- Avoid taking their child out of school during term-time, where this is unavoidable, and only in exceptional circumstances send a written leave request to the Headteacher.

## 6. **The Attendance Team at Wilbraham Primary School:**

6.1 Attendance is the responsibility of everyone in school, but there are a number of key staff dedicated to improving attendance and reducing persistent absence by recording, monitoring, analysing, communicating, visiting and managing escalating interventions where necessary.

- Assistant Headteacher: Leads on Attendance Strategy.
- Attendance Officer x 1: Ensures that the Wilbraham Primary School Attendance Policy is implemented and standards adhered to. Investigate cases of PA and arrange home

visits. Coordinate with admin staff on admissions and deletions. Produces all documentation for Penalty Notices and Prosecutions.

- Attendance Adviser from One Education: Offers support and guidance on the legal framework surrounding Attendance. Conducts home visits. Monitors PA children with the Attendance Officer.
- Education Caseworkers: Assisting in interventions and reporting attendance to various agencies. Initiating EHA's.
- Administrative Staff: Daily administering of registers.

## **7. Using Attendance Data:**

- 7.1 Pupil's attendance will be monitored and may be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern. All information shared will be done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.
- 7.2 All pupil data is primarily stored on the SIMS computer system. Every pupil's attendance is updated daily on the SIMS system to which every member of staff has access.
- 7.3 At Wilbraham Primary School, every child has a right to know their attendance and may enquire at any time.
- 7.4 Pupils who are of concern (on track to PA or already PA) will be discussed with the Attendance officer as a matter of urgency, and an intervention plan should be put in place.
- 7.5 Every half term the Attendance Officer will produce a BRAG report detailing the attendance level of each pupil in school.
- Every parent/carer is sent their child's BRAG report so that they are kept up to date with their child's overall attendance percentage.
  - This pupil attendance data will be used to trigger school action as set out in the escalation of intervention.
  - Attendance data will also be used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school strategies to improve attendance and attainment.
  - Wilbraham Primary School will share attendance data with the Department for Education and the Local Authority as required.
  - All information shared will be done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

## **8. Support Systems:**

- 8.1 School recognises that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home or in school. Parents/carers should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse, etc. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.
- 8.2 Wilbraham Primary School also recognises that some students are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children. These pupils will be identified at an early stage through the various aspects for family and pupil support.
- 8.3 The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include:

- Discussion with parents/carers and pupils.
- Attendance Panels
- Attendance Support Plan
- Referrals to support agencies
- Adapted reward systems, taking into account a student's individual needs as appropriate.
- Time limited part time time-tables.
- Additional learning support.
- Behaviour support.
- Reintegration support packages.

8.4 Some of the above may be used as part of the Early Help Assessment (EHA).

8.5 Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents/carers and pupils.

8.6 Where parents/carers fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, Wilbraham Primary School will consider the use of legal sanctions.

## 9. Legal Sanctions:

9.1 **Prosecution:** Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, the Local Authority will be notified and legal action in the Magistrates' Court may be taken. The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and will appear as a prosecution witness if required by the court. This is to ensure that parents/carers realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

9.2 Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent/carer fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child if he/she is a registered pupil at a school and is of compulsory school age, then they are guilty of an offence. A parent/carer found guilty of this offence can be fined up to £2,500 and/or be imprisoned for a period of three months. Alternatives to Section 444 prosecution are Parenting Contracts, Penalty Notices or an Education Supervision Order.

9.3 **Parenting Contracts:** (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) A Parenting Contract is a voluntary agreement between school and the parent/carer, it can also be extended to include the child and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance. The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target. The contract will be reviewed regularly. The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should parents/carers fail to carry out agreed actions.

9.4 Parenting Contracts will be used in accordance with Manchester City Council's Parenting Contract Protocol.

9.5 **Penalty Notices:** (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- A pupil is absent from school and the absence has not been authorised by the school.
- A pupil has accrued unauthorised absence following written warning to improve.

9.6 A Penalty Notice gives the parent/carer the opportunity to discharge themselves of their legal responsibility if a £120 fine is paid within 28 days or reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days of the date the Notice was issued. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

9.7 Penalty Notices will be used in accordance with Manchester City Council's Penalty Notice Protocol.

## **10. Admissions to Wilbraham Primary School:**

10.1 Wilbraham Primary School chooses to follow the Local Authority's Admissions process. As a result the Local Authority's admissions team administer this process.

10.2 When the school is notified of an admission during the academic year, a procedure is followed which ensures a structured, safe and warm welcome to the school community for the individual pupil.

## **11. School Performance:**

11.1 Wilbraham Primary School will monitor and report on attendance on a half term, term and annual basis. Whole school attendance will be measured to the target set (2015/16 – 96%).

11.2 School is also measured against **persistence absence (PA)** as a key indicator of performance (2015/16 target below 10%). In its most simplistic form a child is considered to be a PA if their attendance falls to below 90%. The other way to calculate this is to consider the number of sessions missed as it facilitates the early identification of students as the academic year progresses.

Half Term 1:	7 sessions missed
Half Term 1-2:	14 sessions missed
Half Term 1-3:	20 sessions missed
Half Term 1-4:	25 sessions missed
Half Term 1-5:	31 sessions missed

*(A session is defined as a morning or afternoon registration).*

11.3 Pupils are defined as On Track PA if they are fulfilling the criteria as follows, and as the year progresses.

Half Term 1:	3 sessions missed
Half Term 1-2:	7 sessions missed
Half Term 1-3:	11 sessions missed
Half Term 1-4:	13 sessions missed
Half Term 1-5:	15 sessions missed

**11.4 Any pupil who has 31 or more sessions of absence in Terms 1-5 qualifies as PA (this equates to 15.5 days off school).**

11.5 Pupils in all year groups with attendance problems are monitored at regular intervals throughout the school year and predictions, based on how many sessions have been missed already are made as to whether they will fall into the PA category. In this way early intervention and remedial action is facilitated.

## **12. Student Rewards System:**

12.1 The new rewards system is based on attendance. Pupils are awarded with badges for each full half term they obtain 100% attendance.

12.2 Rewards are also given to pupils who obtain 100% attendance for the entire academic year.

**12.3 In line with The Equality Act 2010, the school will make 'Reasonable Adjustments' (as outlined in Section 6 of the Technical Guidance for Schools in England) in ensuring that**

**those pupils whose absence from school is a direct result of a disability or medical condition are not excluded from Attendance Rewards, where evidence for the absence is supplied.**

### **13. Late and U Marks:**

13.1 At Wilbraham Primary School, we believe that pupils should get into the habit of being punctual. Lateness to school results in missed opportunities for learning and impacts on progress and attainment. Pupils arriving after 9:10am will be given a Late mark. Pupils arriving after 9:30am will be given a U mark which counts as an absence.

### **14. Informing Parents/Carers and Pupils about Attendance**

14.1 Wilbraham Primary School understands that the attendance message needs to be given repeatedly via different media.

- Attendance Notice Board
- Notice boards in classrooms
- Attendance Assemblies
- Posters around school advertising the Attendance Challenges
- Advice on Punctuality and Attendance via the school app
- Advice on Punctuality and Attendance on school website
- Correspondence with parents/carers

### **15. Attendance Drop In:**

15.1 The Attendance Officer holds an 'Attendance Drop In' session on a Monday afternoon from 2:30pm until 3:30pm, where parents/carers may come in and speak to the Attendance Officer and an Adviser from One Education about any Attendance related concerns.

### **16. Monitoring and Evaluation**

16.1 The effectiveness of this policy will be regularly reviewed by the Attendance Officer, SLT and the Governing Body.