

# WILL ADAMS ACADEMY



## ATTENDANCE POLICY

<b>Date of last review</b>	<b>March 2024</b>
<b>Review cycle</b>	<b>3 years</b>
<b>Policy due for review and approval by Local Governing Body</b>	<b>March 2027</b>

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## Introduction

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At Will Adams Academy, we know that attendance is key in terms of safeguarding, learning and future life success. Across the Alternative Learning Trust attendance is a focus as often pupils join with high levels of disengagement and poor attendance. However, we are not just after an improvement from these low starting levels, we aim for our pupils to have comparable, excellent attendance with those who have not been educationally disadvantaged. Improving pupil attendance and ultimately having them in school every day, supports their safety and ensures they are able to make progress across all aspects of their learning.

Will Adams Academy expects our pupils to attend at least 96% of their allocated education plan. Will Adams Academy recognises that some pupils entering our provision have been absent from school for a significant period of time. This is taken into consideration when pursuing attendance.

This policy will be reviewed, amended as necessary and published annually in accordance with current legislation and guidance. The Department for Education (DfE) guidance 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2022' states that school attendance is "essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances".

## Policy Aims

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We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole school culture and ethos that values good attendance. It is therefore vital that this policy is read alongside all others, where we have a safeguarding first approach.

The aims of this policy are:

- To promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality, including how different roles across our school team support this.
- To formalise our robust processes to promote good attendance and punctuality, including rewards and reduction of absences, particularly persistent and severe absence.
- To commit to offering every pupil access to the education which they are entitled to.
- To formalise our robust processes for monitoring and analysing attendance with the aim of addressing patterns at the earliest opportunity.
- To acknowledge the need for strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school, noting the actions we take to support this.
- To commit to a collaborative approach when addressing causes for concern, liaising with relevant agencies and our mainstream school partners.
- To show how we monitor the effectiveness of this policy.

## Legislation and Guidance

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This policy meets the requirements of the 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' from the DfE and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on 'School Attendance Parental Responsibility Measures'.

These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of The Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of The Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006

- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and the 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

It also refers to:

- School Census Guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023
- Mental Health Issues Affecting Pupil's Attendance: Guidance for Schools

## **Roles and responsibilities**

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Will Adams Academy aim to promote the best possible attendance and punctuality for all pupils in order to:

- Ensure that pupils gain the greatest benefit from the education and support on offer, thus enabling them to reach their full potential.
- Ensure pupils have continuity of learning and are afforded the best opportunity for success in coursework and examinations or return to mainstream education.
- Ensure that pupils secure good records for references for their next steps, whether returning to mainstream education, moving to post-16 education, or employment.
- Promote patterns of behaviour which will prepare them for the responsibilities of adult life.

This is a whole school responsibility, however, there are specific roles that have responsibility for key actions as part of this.

### **The Local Governing Body**

The Local Governing Body are responsible for:

- Ensuring the importance of attendance is promoted across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure School Leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly review and challenge attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the Head of School to account for the implementation of this policy

### **The Head of School**

The Head of School is responsible for:

- Implementing this policy at Will Adams Academy
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to Governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of strategies implemented to support attendance and punctuality
- Requesting fixed-penalty notices to be issued by the Local Authority, on behalf of Will Adams Academy.

### **The Senior Leadership Team (SLT)**

The Senior Leadership Team are responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school, through the vision, values and ethos
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Building strong relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues

- Working with mainstream school partners and other relevant agencies to ensure that there is a collaborative approach to promoting attendance at Will Adams Academy
- Creating intervention reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention to support pupils and families
- Welcoming and recording attendance on a daily basis using the correct DfE attendance codes and submitting this information to the school office while on door duty

### **The Attendance and Welfare Team**

The Attendance and Welfare Team work across first day calling, safeguarding and attendance monitoring (including some across hub working).

The Attendance and Welfare Team are responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting any attendance concerns to SLT and Head of School
- Working with Education Welfare Officers to tackle persistent absences
- Advising the Head of School when to issue Fixed Penalty Notices
- Taking calls from parents/carers about daily absences and recording them on the school system
- Providing parents/carers with detailed support for pupil attendance

### **Teachers**

Teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office during afternoon tutor times.

### **Parents and Carers**

Parents and carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends school every day, on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, advising when they are expected to return.
- Provide evidence to support any absences, including sickness
- Provide the school with at least two emergency contacts for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside the school day

*The phone number for reporting absence is: 01634 337111.*

### **Pupils**

Pupils are expected to attend school every day, and be punctual, going to each of their time-tabled lessons.

## **Recording Attendance**

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We keep an attendance register; once each pupil has undertaken their pre-admission meeting and assessments they are then placed onto this register. We keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

We take our attendance register upon entrance to the school each school day and again during our afternoon reading session. It marks whether each pupil is: Present, attending an approved off-site educational activity, Absent, or Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Any amendments to the attendance register will include:

- The amended and original entry as well as the reason for the amendment
- The date of the amendment
- The name and role of the person making the amendment

We also record:

- Whether an absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of the circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

*See Appendix 1 for DfE attendance codes.*

Pupils must arrive at school by 9.10am each day, the school is open for pupils at 8.50am. This means that the register for the first session opens at 8.50am and is kept open until 9.30am. The register for the second session opens at 12.55pm and is kept open until 1.05pm. Pupils will be recorded as late (L-code) at 09:20am. After the register has closed for both am and pm sessions, arriving after these times will be un-authorised (U-code).

Daily afternoon registers are printed for circulation by the Behaviour Team. Attendance is taken and registers are returned to reception. In the absence of reception staff, SIMS trained staff will record the morning register and print the afternoon register for the Behaviour Team.

### **Unplanned Absence**

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of unplanned absence by 9.10am, or as soon as practically possible by calling the school reception via the school's main number: 01634 337111. This number has a facility to leave a message should the line be busy.

We ask that where possible parents/carers provide evidence of any physical or mental illness and require this evidence should an absence exceed 5 days. This evidence might include a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other form of appropriate evidence. Without evidence, where we have concerns about the authenticity of an illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

Will Adams Academy can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa, if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent/carer states a child is unwell but on return to school, there is evidence that they have been on holiday.

Only the Head of School or Executive Headteacher can authorise absences. If there is no known reason for absence at registration the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, until a satisfactory reason is provided. If the reason given is not satisfactory in the school's view, and/or evidence of the reason cannot be provided, the absence will be coded as O (Unauthorised absence). It is reasonable for members of staff to ask questions regarding a child's attendance and punctuality and, when appropriate, request evidence to support the reason for absence from school.

### **Planned Absence**

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. We do ask that, where possible, these are made outside of school hours. If an appointment must happen during school time, we ask that pupils are out of school for the minimum amount of time. Evidence of such appointments

should be shared with the reception team so that this can be recorded on the registers. This can be done via email, text or in person.

If requesting any other type of term-time absence (see section below 'Authorised and Unauthorised Absence'), these must be put to the school with as much notice as possible.

### **Lateness and Punctuality**

A pupil who arrives late will be marked with the appropriate codes. Reports are then run by the Attendance and Welfare Team to consider where patterns of lateness or issues are arising. These concerns are then shared with SLT to take appropriate actions at the earliest possible point. Further to this, systems are in place to send letters home to note when lateness has been noted for a specific reason, such as smoking.

### **Following Up Unexplained Absence**

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of any unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, a text message will then be sent reminding the parents/carers of the requirement to inform the school. Should we still not be able to contact the parents/carers we will then consider if either a home visit or contact with external services (police/social services) is necessary.
- If an unexplained absence with no contact happens for more than one day, then the school will ensure a home visit or contact with external agencies happens.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not.
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained. The Attendance and Welfare Team will also record follow-up communication and actions with parents/carers on CPOMS as part of our safeguarding ethos.
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary.
- If absence from school continues, the school will involve an Education Welfare Officer.

### **Reporting to Parents and Carers**

The school will regularly inform parents/carers about their child's attendance and absence levels. The table below lays out how this happens.

<b>Pupils on a respite placement</b>		<b>Pupils on an alternative curriculum placement</b>	
<b>Regularity</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Regularity</b>	<b>Method</b>
Weekly	Calls and texts to improving or declining attendance	Weekly	Calls and texts to improving or declining attendance
Mid-point (6 weeks)	Attendance figure shared as part of report	Term 2	Attendance figure shared as part of formal report
End-point (12 weeks)	Attendance figure shared as part of report	Term 4	Attendance figure shared as part of formal report
As needed	Phone call from SLT/Attendance Team due to attendance concerns.	As needed	Phone call from SLT/Attendance Team due to attendance concerns.

### **Reporting to our Mainstream Stakeholder Schools**

The vast majority of our pupils are singularly registered; however, some are dual-registered, and attendance for these pupils is shared weekly with their mainstream school.

## Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

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### Approval for Term-Time Absence

The Head of School will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term-time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Head of School's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as 'being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child, which outweighs the loss of teaching time'.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, considering the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. Any request of this nature should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 3 weeks before the absence. This request should be put in a letter to the Head of School with any supporting evidence provided at the time of the request.

Will Adams Academy will work together with the Local Authority and other relevant professionals to ensure any child who will be absent for longer than 15 days due to medical reasons, either consecutively or accumulatively, will have access to relevant and appropriate education. This includes Public Exam provision and the education of siblings where the family have had to travel and stay away from the home. Please see our 'Supporting Children with Medical Needs Policy' for further information.

### Legal Sanctions

Will Adams Academy can refer parents/carers to Medway Local Authority for prosecution. Will Adams Academy do not make this decision lightly and the team will have pursued all reasonable attempts to improve a child's attendance before this decision is made.

The decision on whether or not to issue a Penalty Notice may consider:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, i.e., holidays taken in term-time without permission
- Where a suspended pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

There are three types of Penalty Notices that can be issued: Holidays, 10 sessions of unauthorised sessions in a six-week period, and where a suspended pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason.

The 1996 Education Act clearly states, "If any child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly, the parent/carer of the child shall be guilty of an offence". The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 also introduced the use of Penalty Notices as an additional sanction to address the problem of poor school attendance. Failure to ensure your child's regular attendance at school may result in prosecution in the courts or a Penalty Notice being issued.

In the event of 10 or more unauthorised sessions recorded, a referral may be made to the Attendance Advisory Service for Schools and Academies (AASSA). If your child incurs 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a six-week period, a Penalty Notice may be issued resulting in a £60 fine, increasing to £120 if not paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice within 28 days will result in a court prosecution for your child's irregular school attendance.

In the event of 10 or more unauthorised holiday sessions recorded, a referral may be made to the AASSA. If your child incurs 10 sessions of unauthorised leave of absence, a Penalty Notice may be issued resulting in a £60 fine, increasing to £120 if not paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice within 28 days will result in a court prosecution for your child's irregular school attendance.



## **Strategies for Promoting Attendance**

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Attendance is a focus for everyone in our school. The list below shows some of our strategies that our Attendance and Welfare Team, alongside SLT, use to respond to emerging concerns or trends and to actively promote good attendance and punctuality from our pupils.

Our strategies include:

- An attendance reward system where pupils receive an attendance award during assembly for 100% attendance in the previous week
- 100% attendance pupils recognised weekly in our reception area
- Weekly calls and texts to parents/carers to show recognition for improving attendance and to challenge declining attendance
- SLT daily attendance monitoring, looking at each pupil and their attendance
- Termly academic reports highlighting pupils' attendance with a summary where we have concerns about attendance
- Attendance importance posters displayed around the school
- The use of Academy 21 to support re-engagement with education
- The use of Tutor Time to reflect on weekly attendance and set individual improvement goals

## **Attendance Monitoring**

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### **Monitoring Attendance**

Will Adams Academy will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level.
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern.

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at National and Local Authority level via the DfE's School Absence National Statistic releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside National Statistics. The school will compare it's attendance data to the National Average for Alternative Provision and share this with the Local Governing Body.

### **Analysing Attendance**

Will Adams Academy will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that may need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence and develop strategies to address these patterns
- Analyse comparative data on pupils' attendance prior to joining Will Adams Academy and compare that to their mainstream schools

### **Using Data to Improve Attendance**

Will Adams Academy will:

- Use regular attendance reports to allow the Attendance and Welfare Team, alongside SLT, to facilitate discussions with pupils and their families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

## **Reducing Persistent and Severe Absence**

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

Will Adams Academy will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with parents/carers of pupils who the school considers are vulnerable or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement in school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove barriers to attendance
- Use robust processes to warn parents/carers that their child's absence is at risk of causing a fine to be issued

## **Review Arrangements**

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This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the Local Authority or DfE are updated, and at a minimum of every three years by Phil Hardwick, Head of School. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full Local Governing Body.

## APPENDIX 1: Attendance Codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil on a work experience placement
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day
<b>Authorised Absence</b>		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been suspended but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
<b>Unauthorised Absence</b>		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code 'O' if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised	Unauthorised absence not covered by any other code.

