



WIMBLEDON PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Approved by Governors in November 2024

Next revision: November 2026

1. Introduction

Regular school attendance is imperative if children are to make the most of the educational opportunities available to them. Irregular school attendance can lead to educational disadvantage and can place young people at risk. Children with poor attendance have increasing and repeated gaps in their knowledge and understanding which leads to poor academic achievement throughout their education. This policy has links with other policies required by statute, including the school's Child Protection Policy.

The school is committed to meeting its obligation with regards to school attendance through a whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance and punctuality
- Reducing absence, including persistent (>10%) and severe absence (>50%)
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

This policy will be reviewed and updated as a minimum every two years.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' from the Department for Education (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:

- The Education Acts 1996 and 2002
- The Children Act 1989
- The Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Sentencing Act 2020
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- The Education (Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders) (England) Regulations 2007
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024 The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024 ([legislation.gov.uk](https://www.legislation.gov.uk))
- The Education (Information about Individual Pupils) (England) Regulations 2013
- The Children and Young Persons Acts 1933 and 1963
- The Equality Act 2010

The policy also takes account of 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' and 'Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools'

The Education Act 1996 requires parents and carers to ensure their children receive efficient, full-time education, suitable to their age ability aptitude and any special needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. If a child is on roll and registered at a school, and the law requires that they attend punctually every day that the school is open except in a very small set of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend. For educational purposes the term parent is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day to day care of the child.

3. Roles and responsibilities

The **governing body** is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and questioning attendance data
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

The **headteacher** is responsible for:

- Leading on attendance across the school
- Ensuring the implementation of this policy
- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Reporting on attendance to governors
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance
- Building relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Issuing penalty notices, where necessary

Class teachers are responsible for promptly recording attendance twice daily and submitting this information via the school MIS to the school office.

School admin staff will:

- Take calls/emails from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Promptly monitor attendance pupils with permission to walk to school independently and follow any unexpected absence by telephone

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 8.55am on the day of the absence (and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return)
- Provide the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school regularly
- Arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day

4. Recording attendance

The school is required by law to maintain an attendance register. An entry must be made in the attendance register for all pupils who are on the school's admission roll. Attendance registers are taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will record whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Attendance records will also show whether the absence is authorised or not, the nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity and the notes of where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional

circumstances. Entries on the attendance register are kept for three years after the date on which the entry was made.

School starts at 8:40 for all pupils, and morning registration is at 8:40 for Nursery and 8:55 for pupils in Reception to Year 6 (with any pupil arriving after this time being marked as late).

Afternoon registers are taken at the following times:

Afternoon nursery	12:30
Reception	12:30
Year 1 and Year 2	12:45
Year 3, 4, 5 and 6	13:30

A pupil who arrives late but before 9.25 will be marked as late, using the appropriate code. Pupils arriving after this time will be marked as an unauthorised absence using the code U.

We believe that a pupil arriving late will not receive the best outcomes. Arriving late can be unsettling for the pupil and may cause classroom disruption. Parents who bring children to school persistently late will be invited to attend a meeting with the headteacher.

The school will inform parents about their child's attendance in the child's annual report.

5. Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer should notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8.55am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office.

Absence due to illness are recorded as authorised unless the school has a valid concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a print out from their child's records between the specific dates, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence (the school office can advise what else may constitute appropriate medical evidence).

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this.

6. Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school.

Requests for leave of absence should be recorded on our relevant form (Appendix 1). The form can be downloaded from the website or a paper copy can be provided by the school office.

Parents/carers are requested to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Please refer below to find out which term-time absences the headteacher can authorise.

6. Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil is expected in school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may make a home visit. If contact cannot be made by the end of the first day, the police may be called
- 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 – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Contact the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving the school's education welfare officer

7. Authorised and unauthorised absence

The School Attendance (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2024 state that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are 'exceptional circumstances'. We believe that leave of absence should be avoided if at all possible as it can have a damaging effect on a student's education and overall achievement. However, it is recognised that on occasions there may be extenuating or compassionate reasons that justify such leave. Only in exceptional circumstances, where sufficient evidence is provided to substantiate the circumstances, will any absence from school be authorised.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 2 weeks before the absence using the leave of absence request form (Appendix 1). The request must include the reason why it is necessary to take leave in term time, including any exceptional circumstances that apply, including evidence such as a medical certificate or letter from employers.

On receipt of an application for leave on the appropriate form together with any supporting documentation, consideration will be given to the circumstance. The school will then provide a written response outlining its decision within 7 days.

Valid reasons for authorised absence include (not exhaustive list):

- Medical/dental appointments
- Funeral of family members – using discretion about the duration of absence around travel and funeral arrangements
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
- Sudden loss of housing through eviction or domestic violence
- Wedding of a family member – using discretion about the duration of absence around travel and wedding arrangements
- Attendance at music exams, secondary school tests, open days and induction days.

Any leave of absence that is not authorised may result in a Penalty Notice being issued and/or prosecution under s4441 Education Act 1996, by the London Borough of Merton. The Penalty Notice carries a fine of £160.

With effect from the 1st September 2022, any pupil who has been suspended from school, and provision arranged, if the student does not attend the provision this shall be recorded as an unauthorised absence. This may result in further action taken by the school including a Penalty Notice.

Governors will monitor the effectiveness of this policy through regular reports on attendance, persistent absence, any fines issued and safeguarding/educational welfare.

8. Part time timetables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very rare circumstances there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet a pupil's individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package. (Working Together to Improve School Attendance).

A part-time timetable must only be in place for the shortest time necessary and not be treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement should have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full time, either at school or alternative provision.

There should also be clear arrangements in place for regularly reviewing it with the pupil and their parents. In agreeing to a part-time timetable, a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must treat absence as authorised and code in the register as a C, which is an authorised absence.

9. Attendance monitoring and analysis

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data daily, monthly, 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 is collected daily and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing body.

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data half termly to identify pupils or cohorts that 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 then develop strategies to address these patterns.

The headteacher and educational welfare officer from Merton meet every half term to review the attendance of all pupils, with a focus on children with absence levels of 10% or more. The reasons for absence are discussed and action plans for individual children are agreed.

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.

The school will meet with targeted parents to discuss barriers to attendance and put in place an attendance agreement with actions from the school, parents and the child to improve attendance (typically with a 2-3 week focus). The school will consider and discuss with parents options for wider support services (e.g. Education Wellbeing Practitioner Parenting support, Children and Families Hub Early Help) to remove the barriers to attendance

10. Ten days' unauthorised absence and fifteen days attributed to illness

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the local authority is notified that the child is at risk of missing education. The Education Welfare Officer will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. Parents are asked to help us by making sure we always have an up-to-date contact number. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

In relation to sickness absence, we will provide the local authority with the full name and address of all pupils of compulsory school age who have been recorded with code I (illness) and where the school has reasonable grounds to believe the pupil will miss 15 days consecutively or cumulatively because of sickness.

If a pupil moves too far from the school to attend the school/moves out of the area/abroad the parents are asked complete a school leavers form, available from the school office. This will provide us with the pupil's new home address, potentially their new school name and contact details and contact information for their parents/carers. If no/insufficient detail is provided to the school, the pupil will be referred to the Merton educational welfare officer as a Child Missing from Education (CME) and they will take over making appropriate checks.

11. Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs

The school attendance officer will work together with the local authority and other relevant professionals to ensure any child who is going to be absent for longer than 15 days due to medical reasons either consecutively or cumulatively, 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 for medical reasons.

APPENDIX 1



Havana Road, Wimbledon, SW19 8EJ

Head teacher: Paul Lufkin

Telephone: 020 8946 4925

E-mail: school@wimbledonpark.merton.sch.uk

Web site: www.wimbledonpark.merton.sch.uk



Request for Leave of Absence for Exceptional Circumstances during Term Time

It is not advisable to take your child/ren on a leave of absence during term time as this causes disruption to their education. Schools must follow the law in this regard and may only grant leave in exceptional circumstances if certain criteria are fulfilled.

- **The School Attendance (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2024 state that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances** (This is not an automatic right of parents/guardians).
- **Leave of Absence in exceptional circumstances is authorised at the discretion of the Headteacher.**
- **Please do not book your leave of absence assuming that authorisation will be given**
- Each request for leave of absence will be considered individually with the circumstances and supporting evidence provided.
- Head teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.
- If the school does not agree the absence and you take the leave without permission or your child is absent for more than the agreed number of days the absence will be unauthorised.
- Leave of absence taken without the authorisation of the school may lead to your child(ren) being referred to the Education Welfare Service and the possibility of statutory action and a fine.

I hereby request that (name/s of pupil/s and year group):

.....
be granted leave of absence from school,

Dates of absence From:..... Return to School: Total Days Absence Requested:

The exceptional circumstances for this request are (the school may request additional evidence) :

Who is travelling?.....

Signed:

Date:

Response to Request for Leave of Absence

The school **will** authorise this leave of absence as above.

The school **will not** authorise leave of absence for the following reasons/s:

.....

and therefore, please note if you take your child out of school this will appear as an unauthorised absence on their school record.

Paul Lufkin Headteacher (for the Governing Body)