



Outcomes
First Group

Pupil Attendance Policy

For Acorn Education & Options Autism schools

Willow Park School

Document control

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Status	Final version
Effective from	September 2026
Next review	July 2027, or earlier if legislation or guidance changes
Approved by	Headteacher and Governing Body
Key references	Working together to improve school attendance (DfE, July 2026); Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (in force 1 September 2026)

How to read this document: text highlighted in yellow is new or updated for September 2026, reflecting the DfE's statutory guidance *Working together to improve school attendance* (July 2026) and *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026*.

Policy statement

Attendance is an educational entitlement and a safeguarding responsibility. Willow Park combines clear expectations with curiosity, compassion and practical support. We will listen carefully to pupils and families, act early, make reasonable adjustments where needed and work with partners to remove barriers. Where absence remains unauthorised and support is not effective or is not engaged with, we will take proportionate formal action through the pupil's home local authority.

Our stance

High support and high expectations belong in the same room. A compassionate response does not mean allowing absence to become entrenched. It means choosing the response most likely to help the pupil return, remain and thrive.

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1. Purpose and principles

Willow Park is a specialist school for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. Many pupils have experienced disrupted education, anxiety, trauma, unmet special educational needs or previous school relationships that have made attendance difficult. We do not treat these experiences as excuses, nor do we dismiss them as defiance. We seek to understand what is happening and respond with both support and accountability.

Regular attendance gives pupils the best chance to feel safe, build trusted relationships, access their education, make progress towards their Education, Health and Care Plan outcomes and prepare for adulthood. It also helps the school identify emerging needs and safeguard pupils effectively.

Our approach is built on five commitments:

- **Expect:** we maintain high aspirations for every pupil and communicate clearly that regular attendance matters.
- **Monitor:** we use accurate attendance information to identify concerns early, including patterns of lateness and absence.
- **Listen and understand:** we speak with pupils and families respectfully to identify the reasons and barriers behind absence.
- **Facilitate and formalise support:** we remove barriers within school, coordinate wider support and agree clear plans, responsibilities and review dates.
- **Escalate proportionately:** where voluntary support is not successful or not engaged with, we work with the home local authority and safeguarding partners to protect the pupil's right to education.

2. Scope and legal framework

This policy applies to all pupils on the roll of Willow Park School, including pupils receiving education at an approved off-site setting or on a temporary personalised timetable. It applies to all staff, parents, carers and adults with day-to-day responsibility for a pupil.

The policy has been written with regard to:

- Department for Education, *Working together to improve school attendance*, July 2026 (statutory guidance in force for the 2026/27 academic year).
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, in force from 1 September 2026, and statutory guidance on children missing education.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children, including the Family Help model of early support.
- The Education Act 1996, including sections 7 and 444, and the Education Act 2002, including the school's safeguarding duties.
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.
- The Children and Families Act 2014 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice.

- The Equality Act 2010, including the duty to make reasonable adjustments.
- DfE guidance on mental health issues affecting attendance, supporting pupils with medical conditions, arranging education for children unable to attend because of health needs and providing remote education.

This policy should be read alongside Willow Park’s Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, SEND Policy, Behaviour and Relationships Policy, Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy, Remote Education arrangements and Complaints Policy.

3. Key definitions

Term	Meaning
Parent	In this policy, parent includes a natural parent, a person with parental responsibility and a person who has day-to-day care of the pupil.
Regular attendance	Attendance at every session for the full duration of that session, unless a statutory reason for absence applies.
Authorised absence	An absence the school has agreed can be recorded using an authorised attendance code. Parents cannot authorise absence themselves.
Unauthorised absence	An absence recorded using an unauthorised code because permission was not granted, no satisfactory reason was established, or the pupil arrived after the register closed without an authorised reason.
Persistent absence	Missing 10 per cent or more of possible school sessions for any reason.
Severe absence	Missing 50 per cent or more of possible school sessions for any reason.
Emotionally based school avoidance	A descriptive term for difficulty attending school because of significant emotional distress. It is not a diagnosis or an attendance code. The school records the actual reason for each absence and builds support around the pupil’s assessed needs.
Home local authority	The local authority responsible for the pupil’s education and attendance support. This may differ from Milton Keynes because Willow Park receives pupils from more than one authority.
Family Help	The multi-agency model of early, whole-family support described in Working Together to Safeguard Children and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, delivered through local arrangements. It replaces and extends what was previously described as early help.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 Proprietor and Governing Body

- Promote attendance as a core part of the school’s safeguarding, SEND and educational work.
- Hold the Headteacher to account for lawful registration, effective support, accurate data and timely work with local authorities.

- Review attendance information at least termly, challenge trends and ensure resources are directed to pupils and cohorts who need them most.
- Ensure staff receive appropriate attendance training and that this policy is reviewed regularly.

4.2 Headteacher

- Provide strategic leadership for attendance and ensure this policy is implemented consistently and fairly.
- Set high expectations while ensuring decisions take account of individual needs, equality duties and safeguarding concerns.
- Monitor the impact of attendance strategies and report to the Governing Body.
- Authorise leave of absence decisions and oversee referrals to the appropriate local authority where formal intervention may be required.

4.3 Senior Attendance Champion

- The Senior Attendance Champion is Vicki Gunner, Designated Safeguarding Lead. She can be contacted through the school office on 01908 348259 or at admin@willowparkschool.co.uk, marked for her attention.
- Lead the school's attendance strategy, systems and culture.
- Maintain oversight of attendance data, persistent and severe absence, personalised timetables and pupils receiving education off site.
- Lead formal attendance meetings and coordinate work with the home local authority, social care, youth justice, health and other partners.

4.4 Attendance Team

- The Attendance Officer, Inclusion Team Manager and the Inclusion Mentors provide the day-to-day family contact. They can be contacted through the school office on 01908 348259 or at admin@willowparkschool.co.uk.
- Monitor registers and daily absence, make first-day contact and record reasons promptly.
- Analyse patterns, prepare reports and alert leaders to emerging concerns.
- Maintain regular, respectful contact with families and arrange meetings, home visits or welfare checks where appropriate.
- The Inclusion Team Manager will lead formal attendance meetings and coordinate work with the home local authority, social care, youth justice, health and other partners.
- Ensure a consistent named adult coordinates support for pupils and families.
- Coordinate attendance returns and sickness returns with local authorities.

4.5 Designated Safeguarding Lead, SENCO and clinical team

- Consider whether absence is a safeguarding indicator or is linked to unmet SEND, health, trauma or family need.
- Coordinate reasonable adjustments, clinical advice, Education, Health and Care Plan provision and multi-agency support.

- Ensure pupils with a social worker, looked-after pupils and pupils subject to youth justice involvement receive timely, joined-up support.
- Ensure, in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, that all staff understand the school's safeguarding response to pupils who are absent from education, particularly on repeat occasions or for prolonged periods, and that this is covered in staff induction and training.

4.6 Heads of Key Stage, tutors and teaching staff

- Notice and respond to patterns of absence, lateness, disengagement and changes in presentation.
- Maintain warm contact during absence and support a planned, dignified return to learning.
- Implement agreed attendance, reintegration and reasonable adjustment plans consistently.

4.7 Parents and carers

- Ensure their child attends every scheduled session punctually unless a statutory reason for absence applies.
- Contact the school by 8.00am on the first and every subsequent day of unexpected absence, explain the reason and provide an expected return date.
- Provide at least two current emergency contacts where possible.
- Arrange routine appointments outside school time where reasonably possible and provide advance notice of unavoidable appointments.
- Engage with support, meetings and agreed attendance plans, and tell the school early when barriers are emerging.

4.8 Pupils

- Attend and arrive on time, supported according to age and need.
- Tell a trusted adult when something at school or outside school is making attendance difficult.
- Contribute to support and reintegration plans and take part in reviewing what is helping.

5. School day, registration and punctuality

Item	Willow Park arrangement
School day	Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday: 8.30am to 3.20pm. Wednesday: 8.30am to 1.40pm.
Morning register	Taken at 8.45am for all pupils. It closes at 9.15am.
Afternoon register	Taken at 1pm for all pupils. It closes at 1.30pm.
Unexpected absence	Parents must telephone 01908 348259 by 8.00am on each day of absence.
Late before register closes	Code L. The pupil is present but late.
Arrival after register closes	Code U, unless another authorised code accurately applies.

The register is taken at the same time for all pupils, in line with the July 2026 guidance. It remains open for 30 minutes for each session. Pupils arriving late are welcomed calmly, registered immediately and supported to enter learning without public criticism. Repeated lateness will be explored with the pupil and family because it can indicate transport, routine, anxiety, sleep or other barriers.

Where transport normally provided by the school or a local authority is unavailable, the school will apply the national code that accurately reflects the circumstances. Difficulties with private transport do not automatically authorise absence, but the school will work with the family and commissioning authority to identify practical solutions.

6. Reporting, following up absence and safeguarding

6.1 Parent reporting

Parents should contact the school by telephone before 8.00am on the first day of an unexpected absence and on every further day unless another arrangement has been agreed. The message should include the reason, any relevant safeguarding information and the likely date of return.

6.2 First-day response and safeguarding

When a pupil expected in school has not arrived and no reason has been received, the attendance team will contact the family as soon as possible after the register closes. The school will use the contact information available and may contact more than one responsible adult.

Where contact cannot be established, the explanation is unclear or the pupil may be at risk, the school will take proportionate safeguarding action. This may include contacting other professionals, making a risk-assessed home visit or welfare check, contacting children's social care or requesting police support where there is an immediate concern.

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 is clear that being absent, as well as missing, from education can be a warning sign of a range of safeguarding concerns, including neglect, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation. Repeated or prolonged absence will always prompt consideration by the Designated Safeguarding Lead, and the school's safeguarding response to absence is set out in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and covered in staff induction.

6.3 Pupils with a social worker or youth justice service worker

The school will inform the relevant social worker and/or youth justice service worker of unexplained absence. Attendance concerns will be considered within Child in Need, Child Protection, Personal Education Plan, youth justice and other multi-agency planning where applicable.

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 recognises attendance as a key factor in safeguarding. The school will work with the relevant Virtual School Head, who is expected to work with local authorities to set and report on ambitious targets to improve the attendance of children with a social worker and looked-after children.

6.4 Returning after absence

Every return should communicate belonging rather than blame. Staff will check in privately, identify any immediate support, repair missed learning without overwhelming the pupil and review whether the attendance plan needs to change. Significant or repeated absence will normally lead to a structured return meeting or reintegration plan.

7. Recording attendance accurately

- The school keeps electronic admission and attendance registers using iSAMS.
- The register is taken at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session, at the same time for every registered pupil.
- Each pupil is recorded using the national attendance and absence code that most accurately reflects where they are and why.
- Code N is used only while the reason for absence is being established. It will be replaced by the correct code as soon as possible and no later than five school days after the session. If no reason is established, code O will be used.
- Any amendment preserves the original entry, amended entry, reason, date and identity of the person making the amendment.
- Register entries are retained for six years from the date of entry.
- Attendance at off-site provision is recorded only after the provider has confirmed the pupil's presence. If the pupil does not attend the approved activity, an appropriate absence code is used.
- Codes will be applied consistently with the detailed definitions in the July 2026 guidance, including for dual registration (D), lack of access arrangements (Q), transport normally provided being unavailable (Y6) and arrival after the register closes (U).

Attendance codes describe the legal and factual reason for a session. Terms such as EBSA, anxiety, dysregulation or transport difficulty may be important to the support plan, but the register must use the national code that accurately describes the session.

8. Authorised and unauthorised absence

8.1 Illness

Physical and mental health related illness may be recorded as authorised absence where the school is satisfied that the pupil was unable to attend. In most cases, a parent's notification will be accepted without medical evidence.

In line with the July 2026 guidance, the school will not operate blanket rules requiring medical evidence. Reasonable evidence may be requested where there is genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness, or where a prolonged or repeated pattern means evidence would help the school understand needs, make adjustments or code absence accurately. Evidence may include appointment information, prescriptions, professional correspondence or another proportionate form. The school will be mindful of pressure on health services and family circumstances.

Where there are reasonable grounds to believe that illness will lead to 15 or more school days of absence, consecutively or cumulatively within the school year, the school will submit a sickness return to the home local authority and work with it to secure continuity of education.

8.2 Medical and dental appointments

Parents should provide advance notice and, where reasonably available, evidence of the appointment. Appointments should be arranged outside school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should attend before and/or after the appointment and be absent only for the minimum time required.

8.3 Leave of absence during term time

Leave of absence will be granted only where the Headteacher considers that the statutory criteria or exceptional circumstances are met. Each request will be considered individually, taking account of the facts, the pupil's needs, the family context and the likely educational impact. In line with the July 2026 guidance, Willow Park will not operate a blanket policy that results in leave being granted, or refused, automatically because of a particular event.

- Requests must normally be made in writing before the absence and, where possible, at least two school weeks in advance.
- The Headteacher may ask for proportionate information to understand the request.
- Leave cannot be authorised retrospectively.
- A holiday or leisure trip during term time will not normally amount to an exceptional circumstance.
- Leave will not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.
- Where leave is granted, the school will decide the authorised duration and record it using the correct code.

8.4 Other authorised reasons

Other authorised reasons may include religious observance on a day exclusively set apart by the relevant religious body, approved study leave for public examinations, an agreed interview, suspension, a regulated performance, Traveller occupational travel or an unavoidable cause, where the relevant national code criteria are met.

8.5 Unauthorised absence

Absence will be unauthorised where no reason is established, the school is not satisfied that an authorised code applies, leave was not requested or granted, a pupil takes a holiday without permission, or the pupil arrives after the register closes without an authorised reason. The school will explain coding decisions to parents and will correct an entry if reliable new information shows that a different code should have been used.

9. Working with families to improve attendance

Willow Park will respond early, relationally and with increasing structure as absence intensifies. Percentages are important indicators, but they do not tell the whole story. Decisions will take

account of the pattern, reason, duration, safeguarding context, pupil voice, SEND and the family's engagement with support.

- Identify and remove in-school barriers, including relationships, bullying, curriculum access, sensory needs, routines, uniform, lunch, transport transition and access to a trusted adult.
- Agree a named member of staff who remains the consistent contact for the pupil and family wherever possible.
- Use an attendance support plan with clear actions, responsibilities, success measures and review dates.
- Offer home-school planning, mentoring, regulation support, clinical input, family liaison, careers or alternative curriculum opportunities where they address the identified barrier.
- Refer or signpost to Family Help and wider early support services, health, social care, youth justice, young carer and community services where needs extend beyond the school, using the local threshold and referral arrangements.
- Review interventions with the pupil and family. If an approach is not working, understand why and change it rather than repeating the same unsuccessful response.

An attendance contract may be offered where voluntary support needs to be formalised. It is a written, voluntary agreement that records the barriers, support, parental commitments, school commitments, review arrangements and possible next steps. It is not a punishment and does not replace the school's duty to provide support.

10. SEND, health, mental health and emotionally based barriers

Pupils with SEND, disabilities or long-term physical or mental health needs have the same right to education and the same attendance ambition as other pupils. They may need additional support and reasonable adjustments to make attendance achievable. The school will not lower aspiration simply because a pupil's route back is complex.

- Work with the pupil and family to understand individual needs rather than assuming the cause of absence.
- Ensure the provision in the Education, Health and Care Plan is accessible and consider whether the plan or placement requires urgent review.
- Make and review reasonable adjustments, including changes to arrival, transitions, environment, sensory demands, uniform, lunch, communication, regulation support and timetable design.
- Coordinate with health professionals and the home local authority while recognising that school staff do not diagnose or treat medical conditions.
- Consider a time-limited phased return where it is part of a clear plan to increase attendance and is in the pupil's best interests.
- Maintain education, relationships and belonging during necessary absence without presenting remote work as a permanent alternative to school.

10.1 Mental health and emotionally based school avoidance

Where emotional distress is contributing to absence, the school will use a formulation led approach. This may include identifying triggers and protective factors, gathering pupil voice in an accessible way, agreeing a trusted adult, reducing avoidable threat, using gradual exposure and celebrating manageable steps towards fuller attendance.

In line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, staff are alert to warning signs that a pupil may need mental health support, including significant changes in behaviour, ongoing difficulty sleeping, withdrawing from social situations, not wanting to do things they usually enjoy, and physical signs of self-harm or self-neglect. Where staff believe a pupil is in immediate danger, they will call 999 or ensure the pupil is taken to A&E; where the concern is urgent but not an emergency, NHS 111 advice will be sought and the Designated Safeguarding Lead informed.

The school will continue to communicate the expectation of regular attendance while avoiding language that shames the pupil or family. Absence will be coded according to the actual reason for the session. EBSA itself is not an attendance code and does not automatically authorise absence.

10.2 Young carers

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 and the July 2026 attendance guidance both require the school to be alert to the needs of young carers, recognising that caring responsibilities can affect attendance, attainment, behaviour and wellbeing. Young carers will be identified and recorded appropriately. Where caring responsibilities affect attendance, the school will work with the pupil and family to reduce barriers, seek Family Help or other early support and support access to a young carer's needs assessment where this appears necessary or is requested.

11. Personalised timetables, remote education and off-site provision

11.1 Temporary personalised timetables

Every compulsory school age pupil is entitled to a suitable full-time education. A personalised timetable will therefore be used only in very exceptional circumstances, where it is in the pupil's best interests and forms part of a clear plan to return to full-time education or access suitable education across settings. It will never be used to manage behaviour, create an informal exclusion or compensate for insufficient staffing.

- Be agreed in advance with the parent with whom the pupil normally lives and, wherever possible, with the pupil.
- Set out the educational purpose, sessions to be attended, support to be provided, safeguarding arrangements for time away from school and the planned end date.
- Include a clear ambition to increase education and attendance, with review at least every two weeks unless a more frequent review is required.
- Be in place for the shortest time necessary. Any extension must be justified and agreed through the review process.
- Involve the social worker where the pupil has one.

- Be discussed promptly with the home local authority where the pupil has an Education, Health and Care Plan so that the provision and support package can be reviewed.
- Be notified to the home local authority in accordance with local arrangements and recorded using the appropriate national code, normally C2 for compulsory school age pupils.

11.2 Remote education

In line with the July 2026 guidance and DfE guidance on providing remote education, remote education will be used only as a last resort, for a limited period and as part of an agreed reintegration plan. It is not a substitute for attendance. A pupil receiving remote education while not present at school will be recorded absent using the code that reflects the reason for absence, unless the pupil is attending approved provision that meets the criteria for a different national code.

11.3 Off-site and alternative provision

Where education is delivered away from the school site, Willow Park remains responsible for knowing where the pupil is, assuring the suitability and safety of the provision, receiving timely attendance information and following up any non-attendance. Attendance will be recorded only when the provider confirms that the pupil attended the approved activity.

In line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, the school remains responsible for safeguarding pupils placed with an alternative provision provider, will obtain written confirmation that the provider has completed the required vetting checks on its staff, and will require attendance information for each session the pupil is due to attend.

12. Persistent and severe absence

12.1 Persistent absence

A pupil is persistently absent when they miss 10 per cent or more of possible sessions, whatever the reason. The school will act before this threshold where a pattern is emerging. Persistent absence triggers a targeted review of the barriers, support, Education, Health and Care Plan provision, safeguarding context and multi-agency involvement.

12.2 Severe absence

A pupil is severely absent when they miss 50 per cent or more of possible sessions. These pupils are the school's highest priority for coordinated support. The school will:

- Appoint a named case manager, normally the SENCO for pupils with SEND support or an Education, Health and Care Plan, and the Designated Safeguarding Lead where the pupil is looked after or has a social worker.
- Maintain at least weekly contact with the pupil and family, using an agreed method that does not overwhelm or alienate them.
- Convene multi-agency planning with the home local authority and relevant services.
- Consider an urgent Education, Health and Care Plan review, amended provision, health support or a different educational arrangement where necessary to overcome barriers.

- Review the case through Targeting Support Meetings or equivalent local authority arrangements.
- Consider whether continuing unauthorised severe absence indicates neglect or another safeguarding concern and follow safeguarding procedures.

13. Attendance data, monitoring and governance

Attendance information will be used to find pupils who need help, not to reduce them to a percentage. The school will analyse attendance and punctuality at individual, group and whole-school level and evaluate whether support is improving actual access to education.

- Daily: missing pupils, unexplained absence, late arrival and safeguarding concerns.
- Weekly: individual patterns, pupils approaching persistent absence, personalised timetables, off-site attendance and the impact of current plans.
- Half-termly and termly: trends by year group, SEND, pupils with a social worker, looked-after pupils, free school meal eligibility, young carers, home local authority, transport, health and other locally relevant cohorts, in line with the key cohorts identified in the July 2026 guidance.
- Termly governance: headline data, persistent and severe absence, actions, impact, statutory returns, equality considerations and priority cases in anonymised form.
- Benchmarking: comparison with appropriate local, regional and national information, including the DfE's monitor your school attendance tool, interpreted cautiously in the context of a specialist school and individual pupil need.

The school will submit required attendance returns to each relevant local authority, including information about pupils who fail to attend regularly or have ten consecutive school days of unauthorised absence, at the frequency agreed with the authority and at least monthly. It will submit sickness returns where the statutory threshold is met and provide other information lawfully required for attendance and safeguarding functions.

14. Formal support, safeguarding and legal intervention

Formal action is not the first reflex. It is considered when absence is unauthorised and voluntary support is not appropriate, has not improved attendance or has not been engaged with. The school will continue to offer appropriate support while being clear about parental responsibilities and the impact of ongoing absence.

- Attendance support meetings and written plans.
- A voluntary attendance contract involving the pupil where appropriate, the parent, school and relevant local authority or partners.
- Referral to the home local authority for consideration of an Education Supervision Order, statutory social care involvement or prosecution where the legal tests are met.
- Safeguarding escalation where absence may indicate neglect, exploitation, abuse, unmet need or risk of harm.

Any referral for legal intervention will include evidence of the attendance record, the reasons for absence, support offered, adjustments considered, the family's engagement, safeguarding information and the pupil's individual circumstances. Equality Act duties and the public interest will be considered throughout.

Letters, notices and penalty notices (fines)

From time to time we will write to families about attendance. A letter from Willow Park is designed to open a conversation, not to end one. It will always set out what we have noticed, the support we have offered or can offer, and who to talk to — and every letter is an invitation to work with us. We will not send standard letters that shame families or reduce a child to a percentage without context.

Some families will have heard of penalty notices, often called fines. As an independent school, Willow Park cannot issue penalty notices and the National Framework for Penalty Notices does not apply to this school. Any decision about formal or legal intervention rests with the pupil's home local authority, which must first consider whether support has been provided and engaged with, whether formal action is likely to help, and its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

In line with the support-first principle of the July 2026 guidance, a referral that could lead to a fine or prosecution is a genuine last resort. It would be considered only where absence is unauthorised, meaningful support has been offered over time and has not worked or has not been taken up, and where the home local authority judges that formal action is more likely to help than to harm.

This route will not be used where a pupil's absence is driven by emotionally based school avoidance, mental ill health or another identified need. Where a pupil is unable to attend rather than unwilling, and their family is working with us, warning letters and fines are not an appropriate response and the school will not seek them. Our response in these circumstances is the one set out in section 10: understanding, adjustment and a gradual, supported return.

Important legal position for Willow Park

Willow Park is an independent school. The National Framework for Penalty Notices does not apply to independent schools. The school will not state or imply that it can issue a penalty notice under that framework. Where legal intervention may be necessary, the home local authority will determine the lawful, fair and proportionate route. Prosecution is a last resort and can be taken only by a local authority.

15. Children missing education and removal from roll

A pupil's name will be removed from the admission register only where a lawful ground in the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 applies, applying the clarifications in the July 2026 guidance, including on pupils entered on the register in error and the 'reasonable distance' test (Ground G). The school will not remove a pupil because attendance is difficult, because a parent is under pressure to home educate, or as a substitute for securing suitable provision.

- Make required new pupil and deletion returns to the relevant local authority.
- Make reasonable enquiries jointly with the local authority when a pupil's whereabouts or education are uncertain.

- Follow safeguarding and children missing education procedures before and after removal where risk remains.
- Inform the pupil's social worker and/or youth justice service worker where applicable.
- Keep a clear record of decisions, enquiries and notifications.

16. Promoting attendance fairly

Willow Park will make attendance visible within its values, relationships, curriculum and daily routines. Staff will explain why attendance matters, recognise progress and celebrate reconnection. Incentives will be used carefully so they encourage pupils rather than shame those whose absence is linked to disability, illness, trauma or circumstances outside their control.

- Recognise improved attendance, punctuality, engagement and sustained progress, not only perfect attendance.
- Celebrate personal progress against an individual starting point where this is more meaningful.
- Ensure authorised medical absence does not unfairly exclude a pupil from recognition.
- Avoid public league tables, humiliating displays or language that presents absence as a moral failure.
- Gather pupil and parent feedback about what makes school feel safe, worthwhile and possible to attend.

17. Complaints, accessibility and policy review

Parents who are concerned about an attendance code, support plan or the way this policy has been applied should first contact the Attendance Officer or Senior Attendance Champion. If the matter is not resolved, the school's Complaints Policy applies. Attendance decisions may be reviewed where new evidence or information becomes available.

The policy will be published on the school website, shared with families when a pupil joins and brought to parents' attention at the start of each academic year and whenever it changes. Accessible or translated formats will be provided where reasonably required.

The Headteacher and Senior Attendance Champion will review the policy at least annually, and sooner where guidance, legislation or local arrangements change. The review will draw on attendance data, staff experience, pupil and parent views, complaints, safeguarding learning and evaluation of interventions.

Appendix A. Graduated attendance support pathway

The pathway is not a mechanical sanction ladder. Stages may overlap, move more quickly where risk is high or step back when attendance improves. The school's response will be proportionate to the pupil's circumstances and the support already in place.

Stage	When it may apply	School response
Universal and preventive	All pupils, including those attending well.	Welcoming routines, trusted adults, clear expectations, accurate registers, curriculum access, family communication, celebration of progress and early identification of barriers.
Emerging concern	Repeated lateness, several short absences, a downward pattern, unexplained sessions or a new barrier.	Prompt conversation with pupil and parent, check in-school barriers, agree immediate adjustments, identify a named contact and review within an agreed period.
Targeted support	Pupil is at risk of persistent absence or attendance is not improving.	Formal attendance support meeting, written plan, pupil voice, SENCO or clinical input, home visit where appropriate, local authority discussion, Family Help or partner referral and regular review.
Persistent absence	Pupil has missed 10 per cent or more of sessions.	Multi-agency review, evaluate EHCP provision and reasonable adjustments, consider attendance contract, strengthen education and reintegration plan, monitor at least weekly.
Severe absence	Pupil has missed 50 per cent or more of sessions.	Named case manager, weekly family contact, urgent multi-agency planning, home local authority and safeguarding involvement, consider urgent EHCP review or alternative suitable provision.
Formal or legal escalation	Unauthorised absence continues and support is not appropriate, not effective or not engaged with.	Refer to the home local authority for lawful formal intervention. Continue appropriate support. Consider safeguarding escalation. As an independent school, Willow Park does not use the National Framework for Penalty Notices.

Appendix B. Common attendance codes

The school will use the complete national code set and the detailed legal definitions in force at the time. This table is a practical summary of the codes most likely to be used at Willow Park.

Code	Summary
/ and \	Present at morning or afternoon registration.
L	Late arrival before the register closes. The pupil is present.
U	Arrived after the register closed and no authorised code applies. Unauthorised absence.
I	Unable to attend because of physical or mental illness.
M	Medical or dental appointment.
C	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstances.
C1	Leave for a regulated performance or employment abroad.
C2	Temporary personalised timetable for a compulsory school age pupil.
J1	Approved interview for entry to education or future employment.
S	Approved study leave for public examinations.
R	Religious observance on a day exclusively set apart by the religious body.
T	Traveller pupil travelling for occupational purposes.
E	Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision is attended.
B	Attending another approved educational activity.
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority.
D	Dual registered and attending the other school.
P	Participating in an approved sporting activity.
V	Attending an educational visit or trip.
W	Attending work experience.
Q	Unable to attend because of a lack of access arrangements.
Y1 to Y7	Unable to attend because of a specified unavoidable cause, including unavailable transport normally provided, widespread travel disruption, closure, detention, public health restrictions or another unavoidable cause.
G	Holiday not granted by the school. Unauthorised absence.
N	Reason for absence not yet established. Must be resolved within five school days.
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances. Unauthorised absence.
X	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend.

Code	Summary
Z	Prospective pupil not yet on the admission register.
#	Planned whole-school closure.

End of policy