



Believe, Strive, Achieve

Winklebury Federation

Willoughby Way, Basingstoke, Hants RG23 8AF

Head of Federation: Mrs K. Bartlett

Tel: 01256 323244

E-mail: adminoffice@winklebury-inf.hants.sch.uk

E-mail: adminoffice@winklebury-jun.hants.sch.uk

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope you and your family had a lovely half term and managed to spend some quality time together.

As you know, our top priority at the Winklebury Federation is ensuring that every child feels happy, confident and able to achieve their very best and I really appreciate the way everyone works together to achieve this. I want to make you aware of an issue that is causing concern and ask for your help as parents and carers to address it.

At present, our attendance rate is **93.2% in the Infant School** and **94.0% in the Junior School**. This is below the **national average of 94.5%** and significantly below what is considered good attendance - 96%. Attendance has always been a concern at Winklebury and we do lots to try to encourage the children to be in school as much as possible, including celebrating the class with the highest attendance rate each week. However, as you are probably aware from the media, the government is having a focus on improving attendance and our schools have been identified as needing to improve.

I want to be really clear with you: **Our aim is not to improve attendance to satisfy the DfE. Our aim is to improve attendance because it genuinely makes a difference to children's wellbeing, sense of belonging, and future success.**

Why attendance matters

Research shows that regular attendance supports children in several important ways:

- **Wellbeing:** Children who attend school regularly feel more settled, build stronger friendships, and benefit from the structure and routine that school provides.
- **Belonging:** Being in school every day helps children feel part of the community. They develop trust, confidence, and a sense of identity within their class and the wider school community.
- **Future success:** Good attendance in primary school is strongly linked to better outcomes later on. Children who attend consistently are more likely to achieve well academically and develop the habits that support long-term success.

A supportive, understanding approach

We know that every child is different and many families face challenges that make school attendance difficult at times. We also know that every parent and carer wants the best for their child. That's why we want to work *with* you in a supportive and understanding way to help improve attendance.

There are many different reasons why a child may be absent from school:

Illness - it can be difficult to know when to keep your child at home and when to send them in to school. General advice from the NHS can be found at [Is my child too ill for school? - NHS](#). If you are unsure if your child is well enough for school, please send them in and let us know—**we will always contact you if we find they are not well enough to stay in school**. Often, once they are with their friends and engaged in learning, they feel much better.

Anxiety - we understand that children can sometimes be reluctant to come to school because they are worried or anxious about something. This is completely normal. If your child is feeling this way, please let us know. We can work with you and with them to understand what's going on and help resolve any issues. Although it may feel easier in the moment to say they are unwell, this often prolongs the worry and makes it harder for them over time.

Medical appointment - whenever possible please try to make routine dentist, doctors, optician etc. appointment during school holidays. If this is not possible, please try to make appointments at the start or end of the school day to limit the amount of school that your child misses.

Exceptional circumstances - we understand that sometimes families need to request time off during term time. By law, we can only authorise absence in exceptional circumstances. These are situations that are genuinely rare, unavoidable, and in the best interests of the child. Examples may include a close family bereavement, a significant religious observance or a one-off, exceptional family event e.g. a wedding, that cannot reasonably take place outside school time. Unfortunately, holidays, cheaper travel dates, family visits abroad, or birthdays cannot be authorised. Please be aware that if you tell us your child is unwell and they then mention they have been on holiday, we will contact you and change the attendance coding from illness to unauthorised. We always consider each request individually and sensitively, and we encourage you to speak to us if you are unsure. Please find attached the leaflet that was shared about two years ago, when the rules changed in relation to unauthorised absences and fine, which explain how and why fines are issued.

We are here to help

We know that some parents and carers can feel unsure about raising concerns with school. Please be reassured: **we are here to support, not judge**. If you are struggling to get your child in to school for any reason, please let us know. You can speak to anyone you feel comfortable with — your child's class teacher, an LSA, a member of the office team, Mrs Robertson, our Parent Support Advisor or any member of school staff that you know and trust - we will always listen, try to understand the problem and then work with you and your child to resolve the issue.

Improving attendance is a team effort and every day in school truly does make a difference. By working together, we can help every child in our community feel safe, confident, and ready to learn.

Thank you for your continued support and for everything you do for your child and our schools.

Kind regards

Mrs Bartlett
Head of Federation