# Attendance (Pupils) Policy

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<th>Reviewed:</th>
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Woodlands School is committed to providing a full and effective education for all pupils. The school believes sincerely that all pupils benefit from the education it provides and therefore from regular school attendance. We believe this sets good habits for later in life and ultimately if your child is not in school they cannot learn!

Woodlands school will do as much as it can to ensure that all pupils achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems affecting attendance will be dealt with as quickly as possible.

AIMS OF THIS POLICY:

- To ensure every child is safeguarded and their right to education protected.
- To raise standards and ensure every child reaches their full educational potential through a high level of school attendance and punctuality.
- To ensure all the stakeholders, governors, parents, pupils and staff receive regular communication about the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- To keep accurate, up-to-date records and have a robust and rigorous system for analysing attendance.
- To identify causes of low attendance/punctuality with individuals, classes and groups of pupils and address them.
- To work with external agencies in order to address barriers to attendance and overcome them.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND THE LAW

By law, all children of compulsory school age must receive a suitable full-time education. Parents have a legal responsibility to make sure this happens.

Schools and local authorities have a responsibility to:
- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Act early to address patterns of absence.

Parents have a responsibility to:
- Perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.
- Ensure their children punctuality

Woodlands School is committed to providing a full, effective and efficient education to all pupils (The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7) and embraces the concept of equal opportunities for all. We will endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome.
Many pupils attending Woodlands School are more vulnerable and have greater needs than the majority of their mainstream counterparts. This means that they may have more absences from school for medical reasons or experience greater social need than others. It is our responsibility as educators to do all we can to encourage and support regular and frequent school attendance. The school believes sincerely that all pupils benefit from the education it provides and therefore from regular school attendance.

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential. We will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all children however we recognise that for some children this will not be achievable due to the complexity of their medical needs.

Parents and carers are responsible for ensuring their children attend school. We at Woodlands School are committed to ensuring that Woodlands’ families understand how important this is. We give high priority to conveying to parents and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents have a vital role to play and that there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems.

Woodlands school will do as much as it can to ensure that all pupils achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems affecting attendance will be dealt with as quickly as possible.

**RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

**Governors Responsibility**

Our Governing Body believes that good attendance at school is the first step towards pupil progress and achievement. The Governing Body of the School will be actively engaged in promoting good attendance by:

- Regularly reviewing records of pupils attendance
- Request from the head teacher reports on attendance and punctuality
- Ensure that they have good understanding of the follow up processes for absence.
- Include attendance in the annual review report to parents / carers.

**Responsibility of the Head Teacher**

- To be responsible for the overall management and implementation of the policy.
- To deal with parental requests for extended leave in line with Local Authority policies and procedures.
- To consider the use of Penalty Notices in line with Local Authority policies and procedures. To oversee the implementation of attendance policies and procedures.
- Ensure the collection of accurate statistical data.
• Develop efficient monitoring and evaluation systems.
• To ensure that the system for attendance is robust and maintained.
• To ensure that every effort is made to meet the whole school target
• Ensure that practice throughout the school is consistent with the policy.
• To oversee the work of the Administrative staff/class teachers/TLRs/Family/Inclusion Manager and delegate appropriately.
• Report to the Governing body regularly

Responsibility of the Deputy Head teacher

• Form positive links with outside agencies such as Education Welfare Officer
• Discuss with EWO / Local Authority legal action such as presenting a case of persistent non-attendance to the Magistrates court
• Refer children with several episodes of medical reasons for absence to the School Nurse.
• Positively promote good attendance within the school.
• Communicate with parents / carers verbally and in writing.

Responsibility of the class teacher

• Ensure accurate register keeping.
• Only mark pupils present in class at the time of the registration. Record reasons for absence if you have prior knowledge of the reason in advance or enter code N (No reason yet provided for absence).
• Communicate with the senior leadership team with regards to attendance/punctuality concerns. Any unexplained absences need to be followed in order to ascertain the reason, ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct code to use.
• Positively promote good attendance and punctuality within the class.
• Make positive links with parents / carers and regularly communicate with them regarding achievements/concerns.
• To be proactive in identifying patterns of poor attendance/punctuality and refer to the headteacher.
• Ensure that attendance data is analysed termly and targets are addressed and pupils supported to meet their target.

Responsibility of the Administrative Staff

• Maintain up to date knowledge of the code system for registers & monitor that staff are using them.
• Have up to date knowledge of the Local Authority’s guidance on matters regarding attendance and punctuality.
• Set up registers at the start of the year,
• Ensure that parent/carer’s contact details are up to date and contact parents by letter who are hard to reach by phone.
• Make the first day call to parent/carers before 10am if pupils have not arrived in school and ensure they give specific reasons for absence. If no contact is made, a text message will be sent.
• Where contact with the parent/carer has not been possible, i.e. (messages left on answer machine), ensure that a ‘reason for absence letter’ is sent to parent/carers on the third day of absence (sooner if there have been ongoing concerns).
• Any unexplained absences need to be followed in order to ascertain the reason, ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct code to use.
• Ensure that punctuality concerns are raised with class teachers.
• Liaise with the Head teacher where appropriate.
• Email staff if registers are inaccurate or incorrect codes are used.
• Systematically monitor applications for extended / exceptional leave

Responsibility of Parents

• To ensure that their children receive a suitable full-time education from the age of 5.
• To be responsible for making sure their children attend school regularly.
• Try to make hospital, dentist and doctor visits outside school hours.
• To send a copy of medical appointment letters or cards in with their child
• To send their child to school before or after any medical appointment whenever possible
• To ensure that their children arrive on time for school every day.
• To contact the school if their child is unable to attend and to give a reason for all absences.
• To ensure that the school has up-to-date contact details.
• To work in partnership with the school and external agencies to promote good attendance and punctuality.
• To attend any meetings as necessary regarding their child’s attendance.

MONITORING AND RECORDING ATTENDANCE & PUNCTUALITY

Special schools are less likely to have day-to-day contact with parents than their mainstream counterparts as many pupils will travel some distance to school. For this reason it is important to consider how best to establish and maintain links between home and school.

Good practice may include regular contact by phone or by letter to raise concerns about poor school attendance and related matters. Inviting parents to attend meetings in school can promote good home/school relationships.

Class register
The school day begins at 8.50 am and ends at 3.10 pm. At Woodlands School an electronic registration system (SIMS) is currently used to register pupils. A register of attendance for all pupils on the school roll is taken twice a day. Once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon sessions. The register for the morning session will close once school transport has arrived or no later than 9.30 am. In the afternoon the register must be completed by 1.30 pm. For each pupil, the register will be marked either as present, engaged in an approved educational activity away from the school site or absent.

On each occasion they must record whether every pupil is:
- Present;
- Attending an approved educational activity;
- Absent;
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

The school should follow up any absences to:
- Ascertain the reason;
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken;
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not; and,
- Identify the correct code to use before entering it on to the school’s electronic register, or management information system which is used to download data to the School Census.

The national codes enable schools to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with the regulations. They are also used for collecting statistics through the School Census System. The data helps schools, local authorities and the Government to gain a greater understanding of the level of, and the reasons for, absence.

**Authorised and unauthorised absences**

Schools must adhere to the DFE Guidelines in ensuring regular attendance at School. (DFES 2003 page 5 paragraph 21). It is the School and not parents who authorise the absence.

Authorised absence’ means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. Schools should consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

**Authorised absences** will include the following:
- Illness
- medical and dental appointments (upon
- Exceptional leave (including Religious festivals)
Illness, Medical and Dental Appointments
Advance notice of appointments can be recorded in the register ahead of the appointment. When the information is given by the parent / carer after the event, the register must be adjusted accordingly with the correct notation and in accordance with the guidance.
- If a pupil has to attend regular appointments as a result of their SEN, their attendance will be recorded as a ‘B’ (authorised).
- If a child is absent due to illness or any other emergency parents should telephone the school before 8.00am on the first day of absence.
Class teachers will make arrangements for their pupils to communicate via email/post with a pupil who has a prolonged absence due to a prolonged illness.
- Where possible long term sick pupils who are able could be assisted to visit their class.
- Pupils returning after a prolonged illness will be reintegrated back into school gradually and arrangements will be made

Exceptional leave
Head teachers should not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The application for exceptional leave must be made in writing by filing in the exceptional leave form at least a week in advance. Exceptional Leave Application can be downloaded from the school website or collected from the school office. The head teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrant the leave. If a request is made for more than 3 days the parent might be asked to come in to school and discuss the request with a senior member of staff.

Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher’s discretion.

Unauthorised absence
An unauthorised absence is absence without permission from an authorised representative of the school. This includes all unexplained or unjustified absences. When an individual pupil’s attendance level falls below 85% in any term without good reason, a referral to the Education Welfare Services will be made by the school. Following investigation any unresolved issues could result in the parent receiving a Penalty Notice or ultimately a prosecution under the Education Act 1996.

Woodlands School will not approve leave for holidays.

PROCEDURES

Unexplained Absence
If a child is absent from school and the school has not received a phone call or other message from the parent/carer a first day absence call will be made. The school staff follows this system until they are able to establish reasons for absence:
1. Phone parents contact number(s)
2. Repeat this during the first morning of absence in no response
3. Phone emergency contact number(s) to get an up-to-date contact number for the parent / carer and update the school system accordingly
4. Speak to the parents the next day and establish reasons for absence and update contact numbers
5. Write to parents to establish reasons for absence
6. Notify Educational Welfare Office / local authority and seek their advice on further steps.

**Attendance Meetings**

The Headteacher and the Clerical Assistant meet each half term to monitor attendance. They focus on children whose attendance is below 90%. The headteacher and clerical assistant monitor attendance of individuals, classes, year groups and different ethnic groups to identify patterns and trends in absence and punctuality.

The systems and structures are then followed to improve attendance for these individuals or groups.

**School Attendance Letters**

Letters are sent out by the school to communicate with parents about attendance and punctuality.

Letters are sent out to parents whose children’s attendance is a concern and parent are invited to school to work in partnership for the child’s benefit. The school is always willing to share attendance with parents who are authorised to see it.

**Sanctions for Persistent Absence or Lateness**

If parents fail to send their children to school regularly and that absence from school is unauthorised parents can be prosecuted or may be made liable to a penalty notice for failing to ensure their children attend regularly at a school where they are registered pupils. The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, Section 23 gives the Local Authority the power to issue Penalty Notices. These may be issued when parents fail to ensure their child attends schools without good reason, as defined by the law.

**TAKING CHILDREN OFF ROLL**
**Safeguarding statement**

No child shall be taken off roll until the school is satisfied that they are safe and accounted for. This will mean that we have confirmation of them starting a new school/educational establishment.

Where it is not possible to verify where a child is, children missing education at the local authority will be informed and a child will only be taken off roll once they give authorisation.

Where a parent has elected to home-school their child, the local authority home schooling department are informed and a child will only be taken off roll once they give authorisation.