

Attendance Policy

Amended: July 2019

Approved by Governors: September 2019

Review date: July 2020

Reviewing Panel: Standards, staffing and curriculum (SSC)

Statement of Intent

Woodlands School is committed to providing a full and efficient educational experience to all its pupils. Being absent from school means a lost learning opportunity. It is vital that pupils, parents/carers, staff and governors recognise the importance that good attendance plays in the life of all pupils. Without a high level of attendance, level of attainment is likely to drop and pupils cannot benefit fully from all that the school is able to provide and reach their full potential.

If there are issues that are affecting attendance the school will work together with parents/carers and pupil in a bid to address any problems as soon as possible. Parents are expected to attend meetings with School and the Local Authority where attendance is of concern. Intervention letters will be sent to parents/carers when attendance deteriorates as part of the school's attendance procedure.

School Attendance and the Law

Under the 1996 Education Act, parents and carers are responsible for ensuring their children attend school regularly and punctually. Failure to do so could result in legal action being taken by the Local Authority. Parent/Carers are committing an offence if they fail to make sure that their child attends school regularly even if they are missing school without their knowledge. Parents who are found guilty of being in breach of the Education Act with regards to attendance may be taken to court and may face fines of £2500 and/or a 3 month custodial sentence. A penalty notice of £60 may be issued by the local Authority as an alternative to prosecution. This rises to £120 if unpaid after 28 days. Failure to pay will lead to further investigation by the Local Authority which may result in prosecution. Parents can be fined up to £2,500 and/or imprisoned for failing to ensure that their child attends school regularly. As part of the disposal, the magistrates may, in addition to a financial penalty consider imposing a Parenting Order, which includes the requirement for parents/cares to attend structured Parenting Sessions.

The register is a legal document and schools must, under the *Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006*, take a register at the start of the morning session, and again during the afternoon session. Since September 2006, schools have been required to use statutory registration codes

Under the *Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006*, **only the Headteacher (and not parents/carers) can authorise an absence**. Where the reason for a pupil's absence cannot be established at the time the register is taken, that absence shall be recorded as unauthorised. If a reason for absence is provided by the parent/carer, the school may decide to grant leave of absence which must be recorded as authorised using the appropriate national code.

In addition, the school will notify the Local Authority of any deletions to the school roll providing reasons for removal prior to deletion.

In compliance with the Education Act 436A (Chapter 2 Part 6) the school will, after making appropriate checks, report all Children Missing from Education to the Local Authority, who has a duty to investigate the whereabouts of such children and negotiate their prompt return to suitable education.

Attendance Targets

Woodlands School has an annual attendance target set by Governors. It is expected that the whole school community will work together to achieve this target. The current attendance target for the school is **95%**. The school is also aiming to reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent (< 90% attendance). For a student to reach their full educational achievement, a high level of school attendance is essential. "Essex statistics show that 95% attendance equates to 9.5 whole days of

education lost and 47.5 learning hours lost for the student. This is why attainment tends to decline with absenteeism.” Learning Hours Lost, Essex. We will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all students.

Procedures - Parents/Carers

- If a pupil is unwell and unable to attend school, parents/carers should contact the school and explain the reason for absence. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, contact should be made with the school **on a daily basis** to keep the school informed of the absence. When pupils return to school, they should bring in a signed note explaining the reason for absence and specifying the dates the pupil has missed. Parents/Carers may also be asked to provide evidence to support the absence e.g. prescription, appointment card and/or medication.
- **Medical** – Pupils must report to Pupil Services and follow the medical procedure if they are feeling ill. The medical procedure is as follows:

If a pupil feels ill they must request a corridor pass from the class they are in and then report to Pupil Services. A member of the first aid staff will assess them and, if they deem necessary, contact parent/carer to collect them.

Pupils should not call parents/carers to come and collect them. A parent/carer can only collect the pupil if the school has contacted them to do so. If such action is taken without the school’s consent the absence will be deemed unauthorised.

- **Medical Appointments (GP, hospital, dentist, optician etc)** – We ask that such appointments are made outside of school hours however if this is not possible the expectation is for pupils to attend school before/after the appointment. Medical evidence should always be provided in order for the absence to be authorised. The Attendance Team, in the first instance are happy to provide specific advice/guidance.

Absence due to Illness

- Where there are persistent concerns, the school will require supporting evidence of medical intervention. This may take the form of:
 - ✓ A note from the practice nurse/GP/hospital
 - ✓ Proof of prescription
 - ✓ Packaging for prescribed medication
 - ✓ Medical card stamped at practice (this will only authorise the day of the appointment).

NB: Minor ailments (as defined by NHS), such as coughs/colds, sore throats, headaches, stomach aches etc. are not considered to necessitate time off school and absences due to these will not be authorised.

- There is an expectation that parents/carers provide school with regularly updated medical evidence to support those pupils with long term medical conditions or those students that are a cause for concern in relation to attendance.

Punctuality

- Pupils should be in school by 8.40 am and registration will commence at 8.45 am. School registers close at 9.00 am. Any pupil who arrives after 9.00 am will be marked on the register as ‘U’. This code means ‘Late (After registration closes)’ and is an unauthorised **absence**.
- Pupils who are persistently late will receive a relevant sanction.

- Parents/carers should be aware that penalty notices can also be issued for persistent late arrival after the close of registers.

Examples of Authorised or unauthorised absences

Absences can <i>only be authorised</i> by the Headteacher. Legitimate reasons for absence:	Examples of absences that will <i>not be authorised</i> :
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illness (other than ‘minor ailments’) • Medical or dental appointments* • Exceptional family circumstances e.g. bereavement • Days of religious observance <p>* Wherever possible these should be arranged outside of school hours.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looking after the house • Looking after brothers and sisters or sick relatives • Shopping • Birthdays • Translating • Waiting for deliveries/meter readings

Missed Work due to Absence

When pupils are unable to attend school as a result of illness, the school does not normally expect them to carry out school work at home whilst ill. The school acknowledges that, in circumstances of illness, pupils are unlikely to be able to complete work to their normal standards and may be unable to do so as a result of missing crucial aspects of a lesson.

It is school policy that pupils who have missed work are expected to catch up work after their return to school. This includes copying up missed notes, and asking the teacher if there is anything they do not understand.

Authorised absence – missed work

If a pupil is absent due to sickness for up to 2 consecutive days, it is his/her responsibility to liaise with subject teachers on his/her return to school to catch up on any missed work. Where absence has been agreed in advance it is the pupils responsibility to collect his/her work from the subject teachers prior to the absence

Unauthorised absence

Missed work will **not** be provided by staff for unauthorised absences.

Application for Leave of Absence

There is no automatic entitlement in law to a leave of absence during term time.

Leave of absence is not a legal right; whilst absence due to ill health may be unavoidable a holiday taken during term time is parental choice. The school strongly discourages parents/carers from taking their children out of school in term time. If, under exceptional circumstances, parents/carers wish to request a leave of absence, they should write to the head teacher at least four school weeks in advance of the proposed date, stating the circumstances of the request.

Whilst the head teacher is able to authorise requests which are deemed ‘exceptional’, please be aware that the vast majority of time taken out of school will be classified as unauthorised. Should a parent/carers wilfully remove their child from school after the head teacher’s refusal to authorise the

absence, this will be referred to the Local Authority –who may issue a Penalty Notice of £120 per parent/carer per child (reduced to £60 per parent per child if paid within 21 days). Where leave of absence is taken without following the above procedures, the school will seek to apply for a Penalty Notice in accordance with Education (Penalty Notices) Regulation 2004. (see Appendix 2 School Attendance and the Law).

Circumstances in which a penalty notice may be issued

Circumstances in which a penalty notice may be issued Penalty Notices apply to pupils of statutory school age. Essex partners have agreed to use penalty notices for the following circumstances (Essex Code of Conduct)

- Penalty notices for irregular school attendance /leave of absence
- ** Penalty notices may be issued where there has been at least 10 sessions of unauthorised absence during the previous ten school weeks. This includes unauthorised late arrivals, coded U, which count as unauthorised absence for the whole session. In addition to the above criteria, due to the importance of pupils settling into school at the commencement of the school year, penalty notices may also be issued if there have been at least 6 consecutive sessions of unauthorised leave of absence during the first two weeks of September due to a term-time holiday. Discretion will be used to enable up to two penalty notices to be issued to each parent for each child within a twelve month period. If the law continues to be broken around school attendance the Local Authority’s legal intervention process will be used.

Rewards

Woodlands School actively promotes and implements reward systems to recognise and encourage good attendance of all students in accordance with the Equality Act 2010; recognising the attendance achievements of pupils who suffer with diagnosed health conditions.

Children Missing from Education

Pupils who have been missing from school without explanation from parents will be considered by the school to be a Child Missing from Education (CME). Safeguarding interventions such as unannounced home visits by school staff will all be considered by Woodlands School in order to ensure the safeguarding of all our pupils. It may also be necessary to liaise with the police, social care and the local authority therefore it is of paramount importance that parents/carers adhere to the school’s first day contact procedures and notify the school before 9am on each day of absence. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016, Regulation 4, requires schools and Local Authorities to jointly make reasonable enquiries to locate a child who is missing from school.

Summary

The school has a legal duty to promote good attendance and prepare pupils for their lives beyond school. Equally, parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly. All staff are committed to working with parents/carers and pupils, as this is the best way to ensure the highest level of attendance for our school community.

Appendix 1 – Roles and Responsibilities

The Department for Education (DfE) has set out clear expectations for both schools and Parents¹ :
Schools are expected to:

1. Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
2. Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; and,
3. Act early to address patterns of absence.

Parents are expected to:

1. Perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.

All Staff

All staff are responsible for promoting good levels of attendance and reduce absence in the school. SIMS is used to accurately maintain attendance records for both registration periods and lessons. All staff are required to take registration of their lessons. Staff who may be asked to cover for colleagues either at registration or in lessons should also register the class using SIMS. Where a pupil has been absent for five days or more, it may be necessary to complete a 'return to school' interview to ascertain if the pupils need additional support following this period of absence. This may include liaising with subject staff where pupils have raised concerns about specific coursework deadlines and/or concerns about their performance in practical lessons.

Attendance Team

The school has a team of staff to address attendance issues. This role involves managing first day absence calls , identifying pupils with attendance issues, liaising with achievement/pastoral leaders and the Local Authority. The attendance team will also track and monitor pupils, particularly those in the category of persistently absent (currently 90% and less) and monitor attendance initiatives. Parents/carers are expected to contact school at the earliest opportunity and to work with school staff in resolving any problems together. This intervention has a high success rate however if difficulties are not resolved in this way parents/carers will be invited to attend meetings in school where school and parents/carers will work collaboratively to improve and address patterns of absence. Home Visits may also be initiated.

The Attendance Team conduct weekly attendance reviews for all pupils, identify individual concerns and recommend the appropriate action. The process of intervention implemented is designed to overcome any identified barrier to a pupil's school attendance without the need for legal action. The process is primarily aimed to work with parents to firstly inform them the concern and then engage with them to identify and resolve any barriers impacting on attendance. It is only where all support-centred measures have failed to make an impact that legal intervention will be considered.

Senior Staff

The school has a member of the Senior Leadership Team who will oversee strategy regarding attendance. S/he will liaise with the Attendance Team and the local authority to agree attendance targets, devise and implement strategies / development plans to raise attendance and review and evaluate procedures. The role also entails linking with achievement leaders, Pupil Support Managers, Governors and relevant attendance personnel. This role is currently held by David Marklew.

¹ DfE School Attendance Guidance, November 2016

Link Governor

School Governors are required to have a link person for attendance and through liaising with the local authority, be aware of developments locally and nationally and to report back to the Governing body on attendance in the school. Terry Reynolds is the link governor who will also advise the Governors of annual attendance target figures which will be set and suggested to the DfE for use in the following academic year.

On an annual basis, the link Governor will review the Attendance Policy. Where necessary, in conjunction with the attendance officer and senior member of staff, changes will be made to the policy and then circulated to the above groups for approval and ratification. The current link Governor is Terry Reynolds.

The Local Authority

Woodlands School works collaboratively with the Local Authority to ensure parents/carers fulfil their legal requirements in relation to school attendance. The school may refer a pupil to the local authority where attendance remains a concern following school intervention. However, if attendance fails to improve, legal action as outlined above may be taken against parents/carers.

Further details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from www.direct.gov.uk.

Review of the Attendance Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually but may be subject to changes in local and national policy.

Signed: _____
Head Teacher

Dated: 9th September 2019

Signed: _____
Chair of Governors

Dated: 9th September 2019

