

# Attendance Policy

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Reviewing Panel: Standards, staffing and curriculum (SSC)

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## 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. We will also work collaboratively with parents/carers, statutory and voluntary agencies in a bid to remove any barriers to school attendance.

## School Attendance and the Law

Under the 1996 Education Act, parents and carers are responsible for ensuring their children attend school regularly and punctually. The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, fulltime education suitable to their age, aptitude and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent/carer to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school. 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 a minimum of **94.5%**. 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

Our school day commences at 08:40am and ends at 15:10pm. Pupils are alerted at 08:35am by an audible reminder in a bid to eliminate late arrival to registration.

- If a pupil is unwell and unable to attend school, parents/carers should contact the school Attendance Team on 01268 282146 before 08:30am 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. Where reasons for absence have not been provided the attendance team will use GroupCall text messaging service and/or phone calls to each parent/carer to ascertain reason for absence. If we still do not receive a reason for absence, we will then attempt to contact all those listed as priority contacts as provided by parents/carers. Unannounced home visits may also be undertaken.
- Parents/Carers may also be asked to provide evidence to support the absence e.g. prescription, appointment card and/or medication.
- Pupils who are late to school will be issued with a same day 15 minute detention. Pupils and parents/carers will be notified of this sanction via the Satchel One app
- **Medical** – Pupils must report to Pupil Services and follow the medical procedure if they are feeling ill. The medical procedure is as follows:

Commented [S1]: delete

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 collect them from school. 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 to enable 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 the common cold, sore throats, headaches, conjunctivitis, stomach aches etc. are not considered to necessitate time off school and absences due to these will not be authorised.** [DS23 7975 What to do - child illness A4.pdf \(essex.gov.uk\)](#)

- 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 pupils that are a cause for concern in relation to attendance.

### Punctuality

- Pupils should be in their tutor classroom by 8.40am when the registers are taken. Any pupil who arrives after 8.40am will be marked on the register as late using the 'L' code. However, any student arriving after 10am (the close of registers) will be marked using the 'U code'; this code means 'Late (After registration closes)' and is an unauthorised **absence**.
- Pupils who are persistently late will receive a relevant sanction in line with our punctuality procedures.
- 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 <b><i>only be authorised</i></b> by the Headteacher. Legitimate reasons for absence:	Examples of absences that will <b><i>not be authorised</i></b> :
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Illness (other than 'minor ailments')</li> <li>• Medical or dental appointments*</li> <li>• Exceptional family circumstances e.g. bereavement</li> <li>• Days of religious observance</li> </ul> <p>* Wherever possible appointments should be arranged outside of school hours.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Looking after the house</li> <li>• Looking after brothers and sisters or sick relatives</li> <li>• Shopping</li> <li>• Birthdays</li> <li>• Translating</li> <li>• Waiting for deliveries/meter readings</li> </ul>

### 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 schoolwork 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. However, staff will use RAW starters to identify gaps in learning and point pupils in the correct direction to catch up on missed learning.

**Commented [S2]:** Delete as in the process of being revisited by SLT.



## 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/carer 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 where the U code has been used (late arrival after the close of registers). 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 however please note If you have previously received a Penalty Notice for an offence of failing to ensure regular school attendance *or* been the subject of a prosecution for any child in relation to irregular school attendance, you may not be given the opportunity to pay a further Penalty Notice; your case may proceed directly to court. If the law continues to be broken around school attendance the Local Authority's legal intervention process will be used.  
Where school can evidence extensive support has been provided but attendance has failed to improve a referral to the local authority for prosecution under S444(1) or S444 (1A) of the Education Act may be requested.

## **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.

Assemblies are held weekly to promote the importance of attending every available session and to share information on team and year group attendance data. Woodlands Brunch Club vouchers are awarded weekly as an incentive and to reward identified students with 100% attendance for the previous week. Excellent attendance is also rewarded using Epraise points, badges and certificates.

We also acknowledge the important role parents/carers play in supporting their child to attend every available school session.

### **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 08:30am 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. Attainment is strongly linked to attendance. The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment. The overall absence rate of pupils not achieving grade 9 to 4 was over twice as high as those achieving grade 9 to 5. For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided. Research has shown associations between regular absence from school and a number of extra-familial harms. This includes crime (90% of young offenders had been persistently absent) and serious violence (83% of knife possession offenders had been persistently absent in at least 1 of the 5 years of study). 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 Parents<sup>1</sup> :  
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.

### 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 use data to track and monitor pupils and specific groups, particularly those in the category of persistently absent (currently 90% and less) and monitor attendance initiatives. The attendance team will also invite external partners where appropriate to provide additional guidance and support.

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 held either in school, via telephone or remotely using zoom/TEAMS 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 with the Head of Year to 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. Sue Elliott Attendance Lead may be contacted on 01268 282146 or [sel@woodlandsschool.essex.sch.uk](mailto:sel@woodlandsschool.essex.sch.uk) if you have any queries in the first instance.

### 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 Nicola White who may be contacted at [nwh@woodlandsschool.essex.sch.uk](mailto:nwh@woodlandsschool.essex.sch.uk).

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<sup>1</sup> 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. Ben Brown 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 Karen Lay.

### 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.gov.uk](http://www.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: 4<sup>th</sup> December 2023  
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Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Chair of Governors

Dated: 4<sup>th</sup> December 2023  
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