

# Woodlands Primary School



## ATTENDANCE POLICY

*...every moment matters!*

<b>Status:</b>	Current	
<b>Date Adopted by Governing body:</b>	30 <sup>th</sup> November 2022	
Created by Matthew Kitley, Julie Puzdrowski & Natalie Clifford	November 2022	
<b>Next review by Safeguarding Committee</b>	September 2023	annual

## **Policy Statement:**

Education is important. Missing school means missing out. Every day the school is open children should be at school, on time and ready to learn, unless the reason for their absence is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent that can result in legal action by the Local Authority (LA).

We believe there are two main reasons why we should strive for maximum attendance and punctuality:

1. Every lesson in school is important in ensuring that our children achieve their potential
2. Attendance and punctuality are valuable life skills

At Woodlands Primary School, we are committed to providing high quality, engaging experiences and learning opportunities which enable all pupils, no matter what their strengths, to achieve their potential. In every lesson, every day, we aim to develop pupils' skills and understanding, carefully building on their prior knowledge and giving them the tools to succeed. Absence from any one of these lessons or experiences can cause anxiety for the child, as they feel that they have fallen behind, and may have an impact on a child's ability to succeed in the task that has been set. Frequent absence, or absence for blocks of time, will have a long lasting effect through the learning 'gaps' that are created in a child's understanding.

Furthermore, at our school we believe that attendance and punctuality are life skills which demonstrate an individual to be reliable, responsible and organised. It is the responsibility of the school and parents in partnership to prepare our children for the future and we believe that attitudes to attendance and punctuality developed at school will resonate throughout our children's life and chosen careers. The school is committed to equality of opportunity for all its pupils and will work alongside pupils and parents to enable all children to maximise their attendance and their access to the curriculum.

## **Aims of this policy**

- To ensure that children and young people make the best use of their educational opportunities by attending school regularly, punctually and in a state of readiness for learning.
- To set out the legal framework and to explain the roles and responsibilities of the Local Authority (LA) and the Education Welfare Service (EWS)
- To ensure that everyone within the school community understands their responsibilities in promoting excellent attendance and punctuality.
- To outline procedures for parents when absence is unavoidable.
- To outline procedures for parents when requesting an 'authorised absence'.
- To outline procedures for the school when absence is not explained.
- To outline procedures for the school when a child's attendance / lateness is a cause for concern.

## **To promote good attendance we will:**

- Reward excellent attendance regularly
- Identify staff roles and responsibilities with regard to attendance and punctuality and ensure rigorous procedures are in place to ensure excellent attendance
- Promote use of data software such as SIMs and CPOMS as a tool to identify and monitor attendance and punctuality
- Establish a coherent meeting structure which identifies attendance and lateness issues and communicates to key personnel internally and externally actions to be taken
- Use SIMs (or alternative) to communicate and inform key staff about individual and whole school attendance and lateness issues. The designated attendance lead will have key tasks to fulfil in order to facilitate updating of pupil records and production of appropriate reports to monitor absence and punctuality

- Ensure all staff and pupils understand how attendance fits into the normal rewards and sanctions structure
- Ensure parents/carers are informed of attendance and punctuality problems that may affect their children's education, via reports or direct contact with home
- Ensure key staff work collaboratively with outside agencies, e.g. The Police, the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) or Social Services in tackling attendance and lateness
- Ensure that whole school attendance and punctuality figures are available when required by The Local Authority, DfE, OFSTED etc
- Monitor the attendance of different groups (FSM, Ethnicity, SEND etc) and compare these figures with national and Wiltshire averages.

### **Rewards**

- Weekly Attendance Cup for the class with the highest attendance
- A class attendance league table (scores updated during the Headteacher's Awards Assembly)
- Certificates for excellent attendance – pupil

### **The Legal Framework**

- This policy is written in the light of guidance from the DfE 'School Attendance: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities' (May 2022) which in turn is informed by national legislation and therefore reflects the school's statutory duties.
- The school recognises the responsibilities of the Educational Welfare Service and supports them in the discharging of the statutory duty of the Local Authority in respect of non-attendance at school.
- Under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents must ensure their children are educated. For most parents/carers this means registering their child at a school and ensuring their regular attendance. Failure to do so can result in the issue of a Penalty Notice or being prosecuted.
- By law schools are required:
  - To take an attendance register twice a day: at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon
  - To report to the LA pupils who fail to attend regularly or who are absent for ten school days or more without known reason
- By law the attendance register must show for every session, whether a pupil is present, absent, attending approved educational activity or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.
- Authorised absence is where the school has given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory justification for the absence. All other absences are unauthorised.

### **Roles and responsibilities**

#### **Parent Responsibilities**

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents/carers who have chosen to have their child educated at school have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's regular attendance.

This means:

- to work in partnership with the school to take an active interest in their child's school career, to reinforce school policies/arrangements on homework, behaviour and approach to learning, to attend parents' evening and other meetings where necessary
- ensuring that their child arrives at school on time (not before 8:40am and not after 9:00am) and that they are collected on time at 3:00pm).
- ensuring that their child arrives appropriately dressed and in a 'condition to learn' (i.e. not too tired or too hungry)
- to avoid arranging medical or dental appointments during school hours. Where such appointments are unavoidable staff should be informed in advance. A 'present' mark may still be awarded if the child attend for as much of the session as they can (if this includes the registration period). It is always better

to attend for some of the time, rather than missing the whole session.

- where there are problems with attendance and punctuality, parents/carers are expected to work in partnership with the school, and any other agencies (as appropriate) to help to resolve the problems relating to non-attendance.

#### **Procedures for reporting absences:**

- **Times of registration**

All pupils are allowed into their classrooms from 8:50am onwards. School officially starts at 9:00am and the register is completed by 9:05am

- In the event of illness or any other reason for absence, parents/carers will telephone the school office before 9.00am on the first day of the absence.
- Parents/carers should provide an explanation for the absence, which should then be confirmed in writing when the child returns to school.
- If the absence is to continue for more than one day, parents/carers should telephone the school on subsequent days, again before 9.00am, unless they are able to give an exact length of time on the first day of absence. It is also possible to report an absence by email to
- [admin@woodlands.wilts.sch.uk](mailto:admin@woodlands.wilts.sch.uk)
- Parents/carers need to inform the school if a child's absence is due to some traumatic event which the school needs to deal with sensitively so that the school can respond appropriately to the emotional needs of the child on their return to school.
- Where the school has not been notified of a child's absence, parents/carers will be text or telephone to confirm that a child is absent and the reasons for that absence.
- Where the school has not been notified and it is not possible to contact parents/carers to establish the reason for absence, the school is obliged to mark the child's absence as 'unauthorised'.
- Parents/carers should ensure that they sign their child in or out if they arrive at school outside normal hours or are taken out of school before the normal end of the day, giving the reason for lateness or early withdrawal from school. This book is kept in the main school office.
- Parents are asked to ensure that their child is fully aware of the procedures they must follow in the event that they are late for school.

#### **School Procedure when a parent has not contacted the school to explain their child's absence.**

If parents do not promptly contact the school to explain an absence a member of the school administration staff (this could also be the Family Link Partner) or a member of the Senior Leadership Team will text or telephone to find out why a child is not in school. If there is no response and the child already has an attendance level that is causing concern then a home visit may be carried out.

#### **Procedure for raising attendance for children with low attendance (i.e. less than 90% and no ongoing medical concerns).**

Step 1: Children with low attendance and no ongoing medical concerns are highlighted by the Designated Attendance Lead / SLT. These children will be put on the AHPCL (Attendance High Priority Concerns List).\*

Step 2: During registration, if any of the children on the AHPCL are absent, and the parent has not telephoned to explain the absence, the class teacher makes a note in the register. The SLT member on duty then telephones home. This will result in a phone conversation where absence is explained adequately or not. See below for response.

Step 3: Adequate response for absence – Note on file and ensure child returns in line with agreed timescale.  
Inadequate response – SLT member to explain that the child needs to be in school as soon as possible that morning.

No response – See step 4.

Step 4: Two members of staff to arrange a timely visit to the house (i.e. as soon as can be safely arranged, and as school situation allows). If no response is received from a home visit then a calling card will be left and another visit will be carried out to establish contact.

Step 5: If after a second visit contact cannot be established, school reserve the right to contact Wiltshire Police to request a Welfare check to ensure appropriate safeguarding.

#### **Procedures for requesting 'authorised absence' from school**

- Parents/carers must seek permission from the Head Teacher (or authorised representative) by submitting a written application, detailing the 'exceptional circumstances' for the request, in advance of any request for leave of absence. Each request will be considered individually and should meet the circumstances of being 'exceptional'.
- Leave of absence is made by completing the 'Leave of Absence Request Form' which can be obtained from the school office or on the school website. Please note that family holidays will not count as a reason to authorise absence in term time, with the exception of the children of the armed forces personnel on leave from active service. Leave of absence requests must be made at least 5 days in advance.

<b>'Exceptional Circumstances' Criteria</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Exceptional family circumstances, such as bereavement/religious observance/wedding of an immediate family member/family emergency;</li><li>• Unavoidable medical/dental appointment (although it is the school's expectation that every effort should be made to secure routine doctor/dentist appointments out of school hours or during the holidays);</li><li>• Absence, within reason, for an external exam such as ballet and music and to attend elite events (e.g. National Youth Orchestra or a representative at a sporting event).</li></ul>

**Parents should note that holidays during term time can only be authorised if there are exceptional circumstances.** Where there are no exceptional circumstances it is important to be aware that the school position is clear. Holiday absence during term time:

- WILL affect your child's learning
- WILL put additional pressure on class teachers and support staff
- WILL impact negatively on the school during an Ofsted
- Inevitably there will be occasions when absence is unavoidable or justifiable, these will include:
  - illness
  - bereavement
  - medical/dental appointments
  - days of religious observance
  - visits to other schools (secondary transfer, entrance exams)
  - education at another establishment (e.g. referral unit)
  - approved sporting activity / performance
  - annual family holiday in exceptional circumstances
- Where an absence is unavoidable or unplanned, then parents/carers are asked to follow the procedures for reporting absences as outlined above.
- Where an absence is for anything else apart from an annual holiday (in exceptional circumstances), the school needs to be informed in writing.

#### **Responsibilities of the School**

- The Head Teacher is responsible for ensuring that the policy is effectively implemented and communicated to parents/carers and for improving and maintaining good attendance.
- The school will ensure that all parents/carers are made aware of this policy as it forms part of our Home/School agreement and attendance information and updates are regularly published weekly in our school newsletter.
- **The Senior Management Team/Designated member of staff** is responsible for developing coherent whole school systems for improving attendance including supportive interventions involving other agencies if necessary. The member of staff with particular responsibility for monitoring attendance is Mr Matthew Kitley, Headteacher and Mrs Julie Puzdrowski, Family Link Worker.
- The Admin Inclusion Officer responsible for attendance and absence will ensure that data is monitored and circulated regularly and liaises with the Head Teacher, the Deputy Head Teacher and the EWO on any attendance issues causing concern. Agreed procedures will be implemented by the team for pupils whose attendance falls below 90%.
- Teachers are responsible for ensuring that an accurate register is taken at the designated time. All teachers challenge lateness and set high standards of punctuality themselves.
- Where any follow up action is taken by teachers or Inclusion staff, accurate records must be kept and copies placed on pupil records.

#### **Designated attendance lead role**

The Designated Attendance Lead at Woodlands Primary School is Mr M. Kitley (Headteacher)

- To ensure attendance is high profile with teachers and that attendance and punctuality procedures are rigorous
- To maintain a list of high priority attendance cases (pupils whose absence is below 90%) that is regularly updated and disseminated to the SLT and Admin Staff.
- To ensure staff have training in SIMS (or equivalent) and access to attendance updates
- To monitor closely their teachers' work on attendance, particularly their taking of registers and the mentoring of pupils with attendance issues
- To encourage teachers to inform them of specific pupil attendance and lateness problems
- To investigate the attendance of pupils with low attendance
- To refer those pupils with major attendance problems where agency input is needed
- To attend meetings including other agencies concerning individual pupil attendance (termly meeting with the EWO)
- Where attendance or lateness problems are identified to communicate with parents at the earliest possible stage

#### **In school the class teacher must:**

- To register the class every morning / afternoon.
- To follow up with pupil referrals of absence/lateness from lessons with the office.
- To follow up unauthorised absence and lateness with pupils and parents/carers with appropriate action.
- Ensure that any children who are late are warmly welcomed back into class as lateness is never the fault of the individual child.
- Keep the senior leaders informed of significant attendance or lateness problems as they arise and update them on a regular basis.
- Where possible, to attend meetings including other agencies concerning pupils in their class.
- In the event of a pupil being absent for three consecutive days and no contact being made by parents, to inform attendance leads of the details.
- To use attendance information to inform 1-2-1 interviews.

### **Administration staff role:**

- To provide a contact to home (first response) where requested by teacher/tutor
- To provide attendance reports and figures to staff to support good attendance
- To support the administrative systems that provide rewards for good attendance
- To provide information and support for parents/carers who have requested updates on their children's attendance and punctuality
- To administer SIMs (or equivalent) attendance system as outlined within this policy including the reconciliation of absences

### **Responsibilities of the Governing Body**

- The Head Teacher will ensure that the school's attendance figures are reported termly to the Safeguarding Committee/Governor who will monitor progress against annual attend targets and will in turn report figures to the Full Governing Body once per year.

### **Concerns over attendance, punctuality and 'unauthorised absences'**

- Early identification is crucial and communication with parents/carers needs to begin as soon as the problem is detected. Initial concerns will either be communicated in person, by phone or by letter (if in person or by phone this should be followed up by a letter), explaining the actions that might be taken should the problem persist and seeing if the school can offer any support to the parents/carers to resolve the problem.
- We will make every effort to work constructively and sympathetically with parents/carers to respond to their individual circumstances.
- The school is obliged to report any concerns regarding attendance (including persistent late arrival) and absence to the EWS.<sup>1</sup>
- The Local Authority can issue a penalty notice in the following circumstances:
  - overt truancy
  - absence from school, either when a parent continually fails to provide an explanation or the school considers the absence to be avoidable.
  - holidays taken during term time where the absence has not been authorised by the school.
- Penalty Notices are also issued for absence taken during term time where a pupil's overall attendance is less than 90% and the leave of absence has not been unauthorised by the school, OR an absence has not been requested in advance and the pupil has had a minimum of 10 sessions (5 school days) lost to unauthorised absence (including unauthorised late arrival) during the previous six months in the academic year and additional unauthorised absence during the previous twelve months up to and including the day the Education Welfare Service is notified.
- A Penalty Notice can also be issued to the parent/carer of an excluded child in the event that their child is present in a public place during school hours on a day which is one of the first five school days of that exclusions or, where the exclusion is for a fixed period of five days or less, any of the days of that exclusion period.

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<sup>1</sup> When making referrals the school must use the referral form CME1 – Appendix 6

## **Policy Review**

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years or, as appropriate, with any changes to legislation.

**This policy should be read and understood in with reference to the following documents:**

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- [School attendance – Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities \(May 2022\) \(Appendix 1\)](#)
- [School attendance parental responsibility measures \(Statutory guidance for local authorities, school leaders, school staff, governing bodies and the police – January 2105\) \(Appendix 2\)](#)
- Penalty notice for unauthorised leave of absence during term time – Information to Parents and Carers (August 2022) (Appendix 4)
- Leave of Absence Request Form (Appendix 5)
- Form CME1 – referral re ‘Child Missing from Education’ (Appendix 6)