

Woodland Academy Trust

Attendance Policy

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Woodland Academy Trust is committed to inclusion, diversity and promoting equal opportunity for all. All schools within the Trust share this commitment, providing an inclusive environment. This objective applies to all policies and procedures and the Trust will at all times adhere to the requirements of the Equalities Act 2010 and any other associated guidance.

## 1. Aims

Our Trust aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

All children are entitled to receive an effective full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude. It is the joint responsibility of the school and parents/carers to ensure that our children receive that education.

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

## 2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education Act 2002
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- DfE (2020) School attendance
- DfE (2020) Keeping children safe in education
  
- DfE (2020) Improving school attendance

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

## 3. School procedures

### 3.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See Appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

**Please see the school website for arrival times at each school.**

### ***3.2 Unplanned absence***

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health.

Children should remain at home if they are unwell. After diarrhoea and sickness a minimum of twenty-four hours without symptoms should elapse before returning to school.

All absences should be notified to the office by telephone on the first day. A letter of explanation should be returned with the child on return to school. If a letter is not received, parents will be sent a letter asking for the reason for absence. Alternatively, parents can notify the schools via email to the front office.

The school is very concerned for the welfare of our children. Where there are persistent or prolonged periods of sickness, the school may refer the matter to the educational welfare officer so that the correct advice and assistance can be put in place to support the family through this difficult period.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

### ***3.3 Medical or dental appointments***

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

### ***3.4 Lateness and punctuality***

Punctuality is very important. Arriving late for school is a poor start to the day, causing embarrassment to your child, disruption to the class, unnecessary difficulties for teachers who are teaching, and most importantly, disturbance to learning for other children.

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code. If your child is late, please inform the school office. Additionally, if you have a crisis before school which means that you are definitely going to be late then do telephone the school as this will also give you the opportunity to book a lunch for your child if he/she arrives after the dinner register has closed.

### ***3.5 Following up absence***

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use. We follow our Local Authority's Children Missing in Education (CME) guidance.

### ***3.6 Reporting to parents***

Parents are informed about their child's attendance via termly and annual reports.

If there are any concerns regarding a child's attendance parents will be contacted by the Community Liaison Officer (CLO) as soon as the matter arises.

### ***3.7 Parental Involvement***

- The school will build respectful relationships with parents and families to ensure their trust and engagement.
- The school will communicate openly and honestly with pupils and their families about their expectations of school life, attendance and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them.
- The school will liaise with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance, e.g. if a pupil has a social worker.

Parents will be expected to:

- Actively support the work of the school.
- Call staff for help when they need it.
- Communicate with the school about possible circumstances which may affect their child's attendance or require support.

### ***3.8 Pupils at risk of persistent absence***

The SLT will:

- Establish a range of evidence-based interventions to address barriers to attendance
- Monitor the implementation and quality of escalation procedures and seek robust evidence of the escalation procedures that work; including attendance reviews.
- Establish robust escalation procedures which will be initiated before absence becomes a problem.
- Support pupils potentially at greater risk of harm who need a social worker through pastoral and academic support, alongside action by statutory services in response to any unauthorised absences.

Designated Staff members will:

- Welcome pupils back following any absence and provide catch-up support to build confidence and bridge gaps.
- Establish plans to remove barriers and provide additional support.

- Be part of regular check-ins to review progress and the impact of support.
- Consider what support for re-engagement might be needed, including for vulnerable groups.

## **4. Authorised and unauthorised absence**

### ***4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence***

Heads may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be exceptional circumstances. Please see Appendix 2 for agreed exceptional circumstances.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Head's discretion, as long as the child's attendance is above 96%.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
- If a parent/carer wishes to take a child out of school during term time, they should seek permission, in writing, from the Head at the earliest opportunity. Each case will be treated on its merits, but it is not the policy of this school to authorise such absences, except in the most exceptional circumstances

### ***4.2 Legal sanctions***

Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Head, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

## **5. Strategies for promoting attendance**

The school Community Liaison Officer and Inclusion Team are available daily to provide support to parents to ensure regular attendance. There are a variety of systems at each school within our trust to reward attendance.

## **6. Attendance monitoring**

The Community Liaison Officer monitors pupil absence on a daily basis.

Parents are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2).

While we expect all pupils, including those in the Nursery and Reception classes to have good school attendance, the Education Act 1996 provides prescribed dates when a child becomes of compulsory school age.

A child is of compulsory school age from the prescribed date following their 5th birthday or if the child's birthday is on one of the prescribed dates, they are of compulsory school age from that date.

The dates are: 31st March, 31st August, and 31st December.

The school and the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) monitor the attendance and punctuality of each child on a regular basis. Parents will be notified by the school when attendance is less than 97% or a regular pattern of absence is noted and you will be invited to discuss any concerns or problems that you have.

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average and share this with Trustees.

The Community Liaison Officer and Pastoral Manager have the responsibility for ensuring that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded on the SIMs attendance software

## **7. Roles and responsibilities**

### **7.1 Trustees**

The Board of Trustees or its committees maintain an overview of school attendance on at least a termly basis. They also hold the Head to account for the implementation of this policy.

### **7.2 The Head**

The Head is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to the governing body.

The Head also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

### **7.3 The Community Liaison Officer (CLO)**

The CLO:

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Head
- Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the Head when to issue fixed-penalty notices.

### **7.4 Class Teachers**

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

### **7.5 Office Staff**

Office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system.

### **7.6 The School**

The school will ensure that absence procedures are understood by pupils, parents and carers.

### **7.7 Parents**

Parents are responsible for:

- Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details.
- Providing the school with more than one emergency contact number.
- Updating the school if their details change.

### **8. Links with other policies**

This policy is linked to our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, Children Missing Education Policy and Complaints Procedures Policy.

## Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
<b>Authorised absence</b>		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment



<b>R</b>	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
<b>S</b>	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
<b>T</b>	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
<b>Unauthorised absence</b>		
<b>G</b>	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
<b>N</b>	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
<b>O</b>	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
<b>U</b>	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Scenario</b>
<b>X</b>	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
<b>Y</b>	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
<b>Z</b>	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
<b>#</b>	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day



## **Exceptional Circumstances Guidance**

There is some debate about what 'exceptional circumstances' means when deciding whether to grant absence for students during term time. At WAT, we believe it is valuable to have some guiding principles to back schools in their decisions and provide consistency. However, the decision to authorise absence is at the Head's discretion based on their assessment of the situation. Circumstances vary from school to school and so there can be no absolute rules on this subject.

Term times are for education. This is the priority. Children and families have 175 days off school to spend time together, including weekends and school holidays. Heads will rightly prioritise attendance. The default school policy should be that absences will not be granted during term time and will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances. If an event can reasonably be scheduled outside of term time then it would not be normal to authorise absence. Absence during term time for holidays is therefore not considered an exceptional circumstance.

Before exceptional circumstances are granted, the child's current attendance will be taken into account. If it is below the target of the school (96%), then the request will be unauthorised, regardless of the reason.

- Absences to visit close family members are not normally granted during term time if they could be scheduled for holiday periods or outside school hours. Children may however need time to visit seriously ill relatives. This will equate to 1 day for the visit and 1 day either side for travelling.
- Absence for a bereavement of a close family member is usually considered an exceptional circumstance but for the funeral service only, not extended leave. If the funeral is abroad or a significant distance away, 1 day on either side of the funeral service can be granted. Religious observances in the run up to the funeral can be granted, though this should only be for a day.
- Absences for important religious observances are often taken into account but only for the ceremony and travelling time, not extended leave. This is intended for one off situations rather than regular or recurring events.
- Families of service personnel can have time authorised if they are returning from long operational tours that prevent contact during scheduled holiday time. The amount of time off authorised will be agreed on a case by case basis.
- Families may need time together to recover from trauma or crisis. The amount of time off authorised will be agreed on a case by case basis.
- Absence for a prison visit can be authorised if it is not possible to be held on a non-school day.
- Absence for a parental wedding is considered an exceptional circumstance, although only the day of the wedding, as well as a day either side for travelling, can be authorised.
- Absence due to the serious illness of a close family member will be considered an exceptional circumstance. The amount of time off authorised will be agreed on a case by case basis, when other avenues of attendance have been explored.

Appendix 3

*Attendance Codings taken from Gov.uk for use during the pandemic-January 2021*

Code	Definition	Scenario
<b>X</b>	All pupils who are not expected to be in school should be marked as Code <b>X</b> . They are not attending because they are following public health advice.	Pupils who are neither classed as vulnerable or the children of Critical workers
<b>C</b>	<p>Leave of absence authorised by the school-<b>Vulnerable pupils</b></p> <p>Leave of absence authorised by the school – <b>Critical worker pupils</b></p>	<p>As vulnerable children are still expected to attend school full time, they should not be marked as Code <b>X</b> if they are not in school (except if they are shielding, self-isolating or quarantining). Schools should encourage vulnerable children to attend but if the parent of a vulnerable child wishes their child to be absent from school, the parent should let the school know that the pupil will not be attending. DfE expects schools to grant such applications for leave given the exceptional circumstances. This should be recorded as code <b>C</b> (leave of absence authorised by the school) unless another authorised absence code is more applicable.</p> <p>As with vulnerable children, critical worker parents and carers should let schools know if their child will not be attending and, if not, schools should grant a leave of absence (code <b>C</b>) given the exceptional circumstances</p>
<b>I</b>	Pupils attending school	<p>If a pupil remains unwell following a negative Covid Test (such as with a different illness) they should be recorded as <b>I</b> but <b>X</b> during the time they were awaiting the result</p> <p>If a pupil has a positive Covid Test, they should then be recorded as <b>I</b> from that date</p>

		<p>but <b>X</b> during the time they are awaiting the result.</p> <p>Vulnerable students and those of key workers should attend school and be marked present or absent in the usual way. Vulnerable students who are required to stay home due to shielding requirements can be marked as Code <b>X</b>, but medical evidence of this requirement <b>must</b> be provided to school unless the school is satisfied with <b>I</b> Coding.</p>
<b>O</b>	Unauthorised absence- <b>Vulnerable</b>	School is not satisfied with reason for vulnerable pupil's absence from School.