

# Woodlands Academy



## Pupil Attendance, Absence & Punctuality Policy

Signed by:

Chair of Governors

Date:

Committee with oversight for this policy	Full Governing Board
Policy to be approved by	Full Governing Board
Policy last ratified and adopted by Full Governing Body	September 2020
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## Introduction

Woodlands Academy recognises, values and respects each pupil's individuality. We believe that every pupil is entitled to the highest possible quality of education.

Therefore, Woodlands Academy is committed to providing a full, rich, efficient and appropriate education for all its pupils. To this end, the school is committed to giving the highest priority to attendance & punctuality and developing an effective strategy. It is the policy of Woodlands Academy to celebrate achievement and it is recognised that regular school attendance and excellent punctuality are critical contributory factors to a productive and successful school career. Pupils at Woodlands Academy are expected to attend school every day, unless they are ill or if there is an exceptional circumstance. 100% attendance will be widely celebrated. The evidence is clear, if pupils do not attend school on a regular basis they will underachieve.

## Safeguarding Children

Woodlands Academy will take various measures in order to safeguard children by:

- Following up unexplained absences after registration, with a phone call on the first morning
- Reminding parents of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality in newsletters
- Publishing our attendance rates
- Acknowledging and rewarding good attendance
- Publishing children's attendance rates on their annual school report
- Letting parents know if we have concerns regarding a child's attendance
- Following up concerns of fabricated or induced illness
- If we continue to have concerns we will make a referral to the Local Authority Attendance Service
- Reporting children who we believe to be missing in education in line with the requirements set out by the Local Authority and the DFE Keeping Children Safe in Education Policy 2016

## The Law

Regular attendance is defined to be in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school. Supreme court ruling; April 2017

Regular attendance is attendance at school on each day the school is open for the pupils unless there is an authorisable reason to be absent; and in accordance with the registration regulation 2006 (amended). Section 444 of the education act 1996. *"If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence."* A pupil's Unauthorised Absence is an offence for the parent.

Parents/guardians are legally responsible for ensuring that their child attends school on a regular basis. If a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly at the school then the parent is guilty of an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. Here the maximum fine is £1000 per parent per child. Other disposals may be in the form of conditional discharges or issuing of Parenting Orders. It is a strict liability offence.

The proof required that the offence has been committed is the school attendance certificate that shows that the child has failed to attend regularly.

Since March 2001 there has been a further offence. This is called an aggravated offence. It is when a parent, knowing that their child is failing to attend regularly at school, fails without reasonable justification to cause him/her to attend (Education Act 1996, section 444(1A) as amended by the Criminal Justice and Court Service Act 2000), i.e. the parent knew of their child's non-attendance and failed, in the absence of any good reason, to do anything about it. On conviction this can lead to a custodial sentence, a community sentence, Parenting Order or a fine of up to £2500. Convictions incur a criminal record.

Local Education Authority Officers, Headteachers and the Police have the power to issue penalty notices to parents of children who have irregular attendance. The Council will issue such notices in cases of truancy, parentally condoned absence, unapproved holidays, irregular or low attendance where absences are unauthorised. Parents will initially receive a warning and offered a time period to improve attendance. However cases of persistent unauthorised absence may be fast tracked to court.

The amount payable under a penalty notice is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 28 day period, the local authority must either prosecute for the original offence, or withdraw the notice. A parent who has been issued a penalty notice can only be prosecuted if 28 days have expired and full payment has not been made.

Please note that this applies to each parent per child. There is no right of appeal against the penalty notice. Woodlands Academy will work with Ealing Council attendance officers and the Police to enforce these measures where appropriate.

### **Promoting Regular Attendance**

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Pupil absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. The official school register is taken twice a day with pupils receive a mark in the morning (am) and one in the afternoon (pm). Registers will be taken twice a day for timetabled lessons. Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility; parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

### **As a parent you can help us by:**

- Ensuring your child attends school on each day the school is open for the pupils, unless there is an authorisable reason to be absent. Only the school can authorise an absence.
- Absence should only happen -
  - a) When your child is significantly/symptomatically ill and therefore unfit to attend school. There should be an observable symptom; 'feeling unwell' is not enough. We may ask for medical verification where illness-absence is frequent, prolonged or where there are absences before or after a school holiday. If your child has a documented medical condition that hinders regular attendance, please let us know.

b) If there is an unavoidable/unforeseen reason or circumstance which is causing a difficulty, please telephone or email us on the first morning of any absence to give us the reason by 9:30am and tell us when your child is likely to return to school. Please keep us updated daily thereafter.

### **We expect parents/carers to**

- Provide a timely reason; satisfactory to the school needs to be given for an absence; otherwise the absence will remain unauthorised.
- Providing medical verification where illness-absence is frequent or prolonged or where asked to do so by the school. Examples of accepted verification include confirmation of a GP appointment or prescribed medication.
- Arranging all non-emergency medical and dental appointments out of school hours or during school holidays.
- Keep the school updated by telephone, email or letter of any changes of circumstances. Making sure we always have your current contact numbers; this includes all telephone numbers and emergency contact details.
- Inform the school if your child needs to take prescribed medication during the day. This can be administered by our First Aiders if not doing so would be detrimental to your child's attendance (see First Aid Policy). The medication, with its label, should be given to the school office and a medication in school form completed to ensure the school is aware of the required storage, dosage and timings.

**If you are leaving** the area or changing schools, please complete a **Leaver's Form** (available at the school office). Schools and the local authority are obliged to track pupils missing from school. If your child is leaving our school (other than at the end of Year 6 to go to High School) parents are asked to give the school;

- comprehensive information about their plans including any date of a move
- your new address and telephone numbers
- your child's new school and the start date when known

This should be submitted to our school in writing.

### **What Woodlands Academy will do**

- Promote the need of good attendance and punctuality throughout the curriculum and pastoral programme
- If a reason for absence is not presented to the school, contact parents/guardians on the first day of absence to ascertain the reason why
- In some cases where there are safeguarding concerns an unannounced home visit will be conducted by school staff and our safer schools police officer
- If your child has a documented medical condition, we will devise a health care plan with you (and in some cases with your GP or consultant) to support your child in school - this might also require us to refer to the school nurse

- If your child has a documented medical condition that hinders regular attendance we will wish to discuss this with you and devise a health care plan to support missed learning as necessary
- Provide parents/guardians access to their child's attendance profile, with printed attendance certificates on request
- Include attendance and punctuality within the pupil's academic report and explain how this relates to their academic progress
- Implement parenting contracts to clarify what support will be put into place to support pupils and their families to improve their attendance
- Via the local authority issue fixed penalty notices to parents who do not send their child to school on a regular basis and/or take unauthorised extended leave from school
- Work with the local authority and parents whose children have irregular attendance to issue parenting contracts, parenting order or/and an Education Supervision order
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements
- Reward outstanding attendance
- Provide parents with information on the importance of regular attendance and good punctuality to school via our website

#### Parenting contracts

Parenting contracts are voluntary but formal written agreements between parents, Woodlands Academy and the local authority. It contains a statement by the parents agreeing to comply with the requirements of the contract, a statement by Woodlands Academy and the local authority agreeing to provide support to parents for the purpose of complying with the contract. Parenting contracts can be used in cases of misbehaviour or irregular attendance.

#### Parenting orders

Parenting orders can be imposed by the court following a successful prosecution by the local authority for irregular attendance or breach of a school attendance order.

Parenting orders include a requirement for parents to attend counselling or guidance sessions to receive help and support to improve their child's behaviour for up to 3 months, and a requirement for parents to comply with such requirements as are specified in the order for up to 12 months.

#### Education Supervision Order

An Education Supervision Order is an order granted in the Family Proceedings Court requiring a parent/s and their child to follow directions made in the Order and work alongside the Local Authority Attendance Officer, as the Supervising Officer, to improve the child's school attendance.

#### Absence from School

Parents/guardians must inform the school on the first day of absence why their son/daughter is not in school and when they are due to return. Pupils should only be absent from school for illness or in the case of an exceptional circumstance or emergency. All other absences are deemed to be unauthorised until an explanation is presented to the school. If a call is not received, parents/guardians will be contacted by the school on the first day of absence. By law, only the Headteacher can authorise an absence from school.

Please note that when illness is a frequent reason claimed for absence then the school will ask for evidence other than a parent's word in order to further allow authorisation.

Unauthorised absence, where the school is "not happy" with the reason given for absence, it is unsatisfactory, or no reason has been given for an absence.

(100% less authorised absences = regular attendance. It follows that irregular attendance constitutes absences that are unauthorised).

There are times when children are absent for reasons, which are not permitted by law. These are known as "unauthorised absences". Examples of unauthorised absence are:

- Waiting for a delivery or repair
- Going for a family day out
- Interpreting or supporting a parent at a meeting
- Sleeping in after a late night
- Going shopping
- Because it is your child's birthday
- Term time holiday
- Parent's illness (other than in an emergency)
- Where there is no explanation for an absence or the school considers the reason given for the absence unsatisfactory.
- Extended leave following a period of approved leave unless satisfactory evidence to justify has been provided
- If a sibling is unwell

Unauthorised Absences are reported to the Local Authority. The Local Authority Attendance Service may contact a parent where unauthorised absence continues to be a problem. Woodlands Academy will work in partnership with parents until matters improve.

If there are patterns of absence (including truancy), the schools attendance officer will contact parents and arrange to meet them to discuss the schools concerns and to work with the parent/guardians and pupil to improve their attendance to school and lessons. If there is a safeguarding concern in some cases a home visit will be conducted.

In more serious cases, Senior leaders from Woodlands Academy will be involved as will Ealing's Senior Attendance Officer. Woodlands Academy also reserves the right to engage Senior Leaders within the GU MAT if they choose to do so when communicating with parents in more serious cases.

### **Persistent Absenteeism (PA)**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling at any point in the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority. If a pupil's attendance meets 93% they are at risk of becoming a PA. Absences for illness will only be authorised with written evidence which might include a medical note or appointment card from a GP or consultant or evidence of prescribed medication.

All of our PA pupils and their parents may be subject to an Action Plan and or a parenting contract and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through a family support worker or/and our attendance officer. All PA cases are automatically made known to the local authority Attendance Service. If a child goes abroad during a school holiday period, the parent must make definite arrangements so that they return in good time for school re-opening. Absence claimed as illness before or after a school holiday must be reported during the period of absence and medical evidence produced on return to school, otherwise the absence will be regarded as unauthorised leave.

If a family experiences unexpected delays in returning from a trip abroad or from within the UK, for whatever reason, the school will require documentary evidence accompanied with proof of original return dates i.e. tickets or an official travel plan showing intent to return on time. Medical documentation should be in English.

If term time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised and parents/carers may be liable for a fixed-penalty fine. Where a child's whereabouts cannot be established he/she may be regarded as a 'Child Missing Education' and the Local Authority will be informed. In certain instances the child may also risk losing their school place. If a child is abroad at the beginning of a school term and absences extended, their school place may be at risk.

### **Punctuality**

Good punctuality is pre requisite to good learning and shows a respect between pupil, family and school.

- Children may enter school from 8:45am
- Registration is at 8:55am. The School Gates close at 9:00am. Children arriving after 9:00am go to the school office where they will be marked in and their lateness noted. Lateness is monitored regularly
- Where children have persistent lateness problems the Local Authority Attendance Service will be contacted

- Where lateness is persistent and pupils arrive after the register has closed, school will code the attendance as an **UNAUTHORISED** missed session. Parents will be notified where this is the case
  - The School office will inform parents if we have concerns about punctuality
  - Parents are asked to collect their children on time at the end of each school day
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- Late arrival after registration closes, without an acceptable reason can be marked as an 'unauthorised absence'. Parents remain responsible for their child's punctuality. Arriving late to school on a consistent basis can have longer-term academic effects. Late arrivals are disruptive to the whole class and often embarrassing for the child. If showing up late to school becomes a habit, children may develop the notion that lateness is acceptable behaviour. This belief can negatively impact their future work ethic and employment opportunities
  - Arrival after the close of registration (particularly if the lateness is frequent or persistent and there is not an acceptable reason) will be marked as an unauthorised absence code 'U' in line with the DfE guidance; this has the value of an unauthorised absence. When late arrivals are frequent or persistent we will want to discuss this with parents/carers
  - All lateness is recorded daily. The number of minutes late and the reason for lateness, if known, will also be recorded. This information can be made available to the courts in the form of a report should a prosecution be the outcome of repeated lateness

Please remember that absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his/her learning. A good understanding of the class work and good progress can only take place when the child is in the classroom regularly and on time.

A member of the Woodlands Academy attendance team will contact parents/guardians to discuss concerns regarding lateness to school. Pupils who are persistently late to school will be placed on dual registration. These pupils will need to register early over a period of time with the Data officer before they attend morning registration or their first lesson.

#### Holiday requests/Leave during term time

The Headteacher is the only person who has the authority to authorise school absences. This responsibility is delegated to specific members of staff. The governors of the school have asked the Headteacher not to authorise leave if a request is to attend a wedding, family gathering or holiday. Requests will only be considered if there is an exceptional circumstance or an emergency.

There is no entitlement to leave during term time. Requests for leave to attend a family holiday or gathering will not be authorised. Fixed penalty notices will be issued to families who remove their child from school without authorisation. If unauthorised leave is taken, the local authority on behalf of Woodlands Academy, will issue a fixed penalty notice, per parent, per child of £120.00. In some cases a referral will be made to the local authority to prosecute under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. The maximum fine is £1000 per parent per child.



Parents wishing to take their child out of school must make a written request to the Headteacher giving at least two weeks' notice. Forms are available from our school reception.

Once the written request is received the school will aim to respond in writing within 5 working days.

Parents will be asked to meet with one of the Senior Leadership team once a request is received to discuss the reasons in more detail. A maximum of 10 days will only be authorised if there is an emergency or an exceptional circumstance. If 10 days are granted and the pupil fails to return within agreed dates the pupil may be removed from the school roll and the parents/guardians will be issued with a fixed penalty notice.

If the parent/guardian wishes to appeal the decision, they can do so by requesting a meeting with the Headteacher. If unauthorised leave is taken, the local authority on behalf of Woodlands Academy, will issue a fixed penalty notice, per parent, per child of £120.00.

### Removing a Pupil from the School Roll Related to Non Attendance

Woodlands Academy will consider removing a pupil from the school roll for the following reasons;

- If the pupil no longer ordinarily resides at a place which is a reasonable distance from Woodlands Academy and is not attending school
- If they are absent from school for 20 consecutive school days and are not able to attend school due to distance
- If they are absent from school for 20 consecutive school days and the school is unaware of the child's and family's location after reasonable enquiry
- If they have an authorised absence and they have not returned within the agreed dates
- If emergency leave has been authorised and the pupil does not return to school for 10 days after the agreed date of return and reasonable enquiry has been undertaken

Once a pupil has been removed from the school roll they no longer have a place at Woodlands Academy. In order to apply for a place families will need to make an in year application directly to Ealing Primary School admissions.

### Leavers

If your child is leaving our school (other than at the end of Year 6) parents are asked to give the school comprehensive information about your plans; including any date of a move and your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to our school in writing. A leaver's form is available from the school office which you should complete. (A destination country or another named Local Authority is not sufficient).

When a child leaves and we do not have information about where they have gone/will be educated, then he/she is considered to be a 'Child Missing Education'. This means that the Local Authority has a legal duty to carry out investigations, which will include liaising with Ealing Children's Integrated Response Service (formerly Social Services), the Police, benefits/council tax records and other agencies, to try to locate your child. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

## **Withdrawals**

Parents who remain resident locally can only withdraw their children from school if they have a confirmed start date at another school or are undertaking to educate the child at home (Home Education). If the latter, this must be confirmed in writing to the school by the parent. Pupils remain registered at school until such conditions are satisfied.

### *Legal Note*

*Parents have a legal duty to ensure efficient and full time attendance at school of registered pupils of statutory school age (Education Act 1996). This is the legal requirement. The School Attendance Service aims to work with schools and families to promote good attendance and avoid legal action. However in some cases, parents are prosecuted (taken to court) or have to pay a Fixed Penalty (fine).*

We value your support in helping us to maintain the high standards to which we always aspire.

## **School outings / visits / residential trips.**

Opportunities for children to attend these activities are provided. If they do not go, the children are expected in school, where alternative arrangements will be made for them.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Throughout the year parents will be kept informed of school expectations and procedures through newsletters.

The school employs strategies to encourage good attendance. Children will receive certificates and praise when their attendance is at 100% or close to it.

## **Procedures**

- Registers of all classes are kept and monitored by staff daily
- Parents of absent children will be telephoned if we have not received notification
- The Data Officer will monitor the arrival of children who we know travel to school alone
- The Local Authority Attendance Officer will complete regular register checks and checks of school logs
- A note is made on the register of children who arrive late
- Logs are kept of all children daily for whom no notification for absence has been made
- Logs are kept of phone calls received from parents and reasons given

- Copies of appointments and other relevant documents are kept as required for proof of absence
- Records are transferred to a child's new school on confirmation of their start date from the school
- If a child is on long term absence due to a medical or SEND condition, as agreed by the school, a home visit will be made when appropriate and schoolwork will be delivered, keeping contact and a positive connection between the child and school and their friends

### Appendix 1

#### COVID-19 Pandemic Addendum

As of September 2020, the government provided additional guidance to schools regarding the Covid-19 pandemic and recognised that there may be some situations, due to the Coronavirus pandemic, where children are unable to attend school.

While attendance at school continues to be mandatory, there are some circumstances when children will be unable to attend school:

- If they are showing symptoms of coronavirus (until the period of self-isolation has passed or a negative test result has been received)
- If a member of their household shows symptoms of coronavirus (until the period of self-isolation has passed or a negative test result has been received)
- If they or a member of their household has tested positive for coronavirus
- If their class bubble has been closed as a result of a positive test for coronavirus
- If they have been contacted as a part of the Test and Trace programme and advised to self-isolate
- If they are required to quarantine after a trip abroad
- If they are identified as clinically extremely vulnerable in a future lockdown scenario

As these absences are due to the on-going pandemic, they will not affect the child's overall attendance for the year.

Woodlands Academy will continue to contact families when children have not attended school, unless we are aware of a period of self-isolation. Remote learning will be available for any children who are required to self-isolate but are not exhibiting any symptoms.

Following additional guidance from the Local Authority, if we have not been able to contact a family for a period of 3 consecutive school days, we will report them to our Local Authority attendance officer and Children Missing Education for additional support in reaching the families.

Additional information is available on the school website or from the school office.

For further information, the government addendum regarding attendance during coronavirus is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance/addendum-recording-attendance-in-relation-to-coronavirus-covid-19-during-the-2020-to-2021-academic-year>