



# ATTENDANCE POLICY

This policy is available on our school website and is available on request from the school office.

Date written: September 2022

Date of next review: September 2024

Author: S Palmer

**Signed:**

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'L' and 'G' intertwined.

**Luke Geary (Chair of Governors)**

**Date: 21/02/23**

# INTRODUCTION

The Academy of Woodlands recognises that good attendance is vital to raising standards and pupil attainment. We know that school attendance is a partnership. Parent/Carers/carers (or guardians) have a legal duty to send their child(ren) to school and The Academy of Woodlands has the responsibility and are committed to working with and supporting our Parent/Carers/carers to ensure their child(ren) attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless there is an unavoidable reason for absence.

Having a good education will help give your child the best possible start in life. Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Children with poor attendance have trouble feeling included within school life and tend to have difficulties forming friendships.

By law all children of compulsory school age must get a suitable, full-time education. It is the Parent/Carer/carers responsibility for making sure that their child attends regularly and on time. The minimum expected level of attendance for any child at our school is 95%. Our target is to achieve better than this because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling. We continually monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made. We will keep Parent/Carers updated regularly on their child's progress.

This Policy operates in accordance with the framework and advice contained within the Medway guidance on achieving and maintaining high attendance, which the school and its Governing Body intend to follow.

# LEGAL FRAMEWORK

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended)
- DfE (2020) 'School attendance'
- DfE (2016) 'Children missing education'
- DfE (2022) 'Keeping children safe in education'
- DfE (2021) Improving School Attendance support for schools and local authorities

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behavioural Policy

This policy operates in conjunction with the following Medway LA policy

# RESPONSIBILITIES

## **The governing board has overall responsibility for:**

- Monitoring the implementation of the attendance policy and procedures of the school.
- Ensuring that this policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation.
- Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the school's Complaints Procedures Policy.
- Having regard to 'Keeping children safe in education' when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

## **The Headteacher is responsible for:**

- The day-to-day implementation and management of the attendance policy and procedures of the school and distributing these to Parent/Carers.

## **All staff, including teachers, support staff and volunteers will be responsible for:**

- Following the attendance policy, and for ensuring pupils do so too. They will also be responsible for ensuring the policy is implemented fairly and consistently.
- Modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated.
- A designated member of staff will take the attendance register at the start of each school day and at the start of each afternoon session.

## **Parent/Carers/Carers are expected to:**

- Ensure that their children attend daily, arrive on time and ready to learn (this means having breakfast before school) each day
- Ensure that their children are properly dressed
- Inform the school office if their child is going to be late
- Report reason for absence on the 1<sup>st</sup> and each day of absence to the school
- Know The Academy's arrangements for notifying absence
- Provide medical appointment cards/letters to the school office
- **Mini bus children only** - Ensure their child is ready and waiting for their minibus

## **To help achieve this, school will ensure:**

- A prompt start to The Academy day
- A suitable learning environment
- The Academy's attendance policy is known and available to all Parent/Carers
- All messages reporting reasons for absence are passed to the right person
- Provide you with advice and support if you are having problems getting your child to school on time
- Try to facilitate the collection of children where Parent/Carers have temporary transport problems if possible
- Contact the Parent/Carer/carer if their child regularly arrives after 9am unaccompanied and offer support to get them to school on time each day
- Inform Parent/Carers each term if their child has been late 3 or more times
- Arrange "late gates" and attendance clinics with the school Attendance Advisory Practitioner (AAP) and Parent/Carers to discuss lateness and attendance.

- Refer pupils with repeated, unexplained or persistent lateness without an acceptable reason to the AAP and/or social services where relevant

# SCHOOL EXPECTATIONS & ACTIONS

Children are expected to attend school daily. They are expected to arrive at the start of the school day between 08.40 and 08.55, unless they attend breakfast club which opens from 08.00 every morning.

The school day finishes at 3.10 p.m. Children are working in class until this time. Early collection disturbs theirs and others learning.

Appointments, not related to the child, are not a reason for early collection and alternative arrangements should be made.

Attendance Percentage	Actions that may be taken
100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximum attendance achieved - Certificate and prize awarded</li> </ul>
96% or above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum expectation met - Good Attendance certificate</li> </ul>
92-94%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent/Carers informed by letter</li> <li>• Pupil's attendance will be monitored regularly by the Attendance Officer, Pastoral Welfare Officer and a member of SLT</li> </ul>
90-91%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent/Carers/Carer informed by letter</li> <li>• Pupil's attendance will be monitored regularly by the Attendance Officer, Pastoral Welfare Officer, SLT &amp; Attendance Advisory Practitioner</li> <li>• Parent/Carer/Guardian may be invited to attend an Attendance Advisory Clinic</li> <li>• Parent/Carer/Carer may be refused any further authorised absence and asked to provide written evidence of illness/absence</li> </ul>
89% or Below	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent/Carers/Carers informed by letter</li> <li>• Pupil's attendance will be monitored regularly by the Attendance Officer, Pastoral Welfare Officer, SLT &amp; Attendance Advisory Practitioner</li> <li>• Pupil will be refused any further authorised absence and Parent/Carer/Carer asked to provide written evidence of illness/absence</li> <li>• Parent/Carer/Carer may be invited to attend an Attendance Advisory Clinic or Panel meeting</li> <li>• Taking in to account individual circumstances, a formal referral to the Attendance Advisory Practitioner, which may result in issue of a penalty notice or prosecution by the Local Authority.</li> </ul>

To help to achieve this, the school will:

- celebrate good attendance via weekly assemblies, and praise 100% attendance regularly throughout the school year
- report to Parent/Carers their child's attendance with each school report.

- contact Parent/Carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's minimum expectation of 95%

It is a legal requirement for the school to report percentages of authorised and unauthorised absences to Parent/Carers in the annual Governors Report and to the Department of Education.

## PERSISTANT ABSENCE

A pupil becomes a persistent absentee (PA) when they fall below 90% attendance, no matter the reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's education and we need the Parent/Carer/carer's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. The school will ensure it provides support to pupils at risk of persistent absence (PA), in conjunction with all relevant external authorities where necessary.

**In order to ensure the school has effective procedures for managing PA, 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.
- Attend or lead attendance reviews in line with escalation procedures.
- Establish robust escalation procedures which will be initiated before absence becomes a problem by:
  - Sending letters to Parent/Carers.
  - Having an attendance meeting with the pupil, Parent/Carers and carers.
  - Engaging with LA attendance teams.
  - Creating attendance clinics.
  - Using fixed penalty notices.

**Where a pupil becomes at risk of PA, the school will:**

- Welcome the pupil back following any absence and provide catch-up support to build confidence and bridge gaps in learning.
- Meet with the pupil to discuss absence, patterns, barriers and problems.
- Establish plans to remove barriers and provide additional support.
- Lead regular check-ins to review progress and assess the impact of support.
- Make regular contact with the pupil's Parent/Carer/carer to discuss progress.
- Consider what support for re-engagement might be needed, including with regard to additional vulnerability.

Where a pupil at risk of PA is also at increased risk of harm, the school will work in conjunction with all relevant authorities, e.g. social services, to support the pupil in line with the school's duty of care.

The school attendance system will be used to give an accurate and informative view of attendance, reasons for absence and patterns within groups, including:

- Children in need
- LAC
- Pupils who are eligible for FSM
- Pupils with EAL

In the case of persistent absence, arrangements will be made for Parent/Carers/carers to speak to the pastoral team and a support plan put in place. This may include home visits, a part time flexi timetable, blended learning arrangements, counselling and involvement of

other professionals. The Attendance Advisory Practitioner will be informed and where felt necessary a professionals meeting arranged to discuss actions and outcomes.

Monthly meetings are held between school and the AAP to discuss the attendance on an individual level.

## ABSENCE PROCEDURES

If your child is absent or you know they will be late it is Parent/Careral responsibility to inform us on the first day of absence, before 8.40am. This can be done by leaving a message:

- preferably on our answer phone
- alternatively with staff on gate duties every morning
- via the school office in person/phone/email

If your child is absent and we have not been notified by 8.40am, we will telephone you to ascertain the child's whereabouts and reason for absence. If we are unable to speak to our Priority 1 contact we will leave a message where possible. We will continue to telephone further contacts provided, until we are able to confirm that a child is safe.

If we are unable to confirm a child's safety by 11am we will take further action to ensure that we know that the child is safe and the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. A home visit will be made if appropriate and the police will be informed

## PROMOTING PUNCTUALITY

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they miss instructions and vital information or news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons and can be embarrassing for the child. Good time keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

To help to achieve this, the school will:

- encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and celebrate good class punctuality
- provide you with advice and support if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.
- try to facilitate the collection of children where Parent/Carers have temporary transport problems if possible.
- contact the Parent/Carer if their child regularly arrives after 8.55am unaccompanied and offer support to get them to school on time each day
- inform the Parent/Carer each month if their child has been late 3 or more times
- refer pupils with repeated, unexplained or persistent lateness without an acceptable reason to the AAP and/or Social Services where relevant.

We expect the Parent/Carer to:

- ensure that their child arrives at school on time and ready to learn (this means having breakfast before school) each day
- let the school know if their child is going to be late
- understand the importance of punctuality and promote this with their child

## LATENESS PROCEDURE

The school day starts promptly at 8.55am, with class doors open from 8.40am; we expect our children to be in their classroom between 8.40 and 8.55am. Gates and class doors are closed at 8.55am promptly. If your child arrives after 8.55am then they will need to enter the school via the school office where their time of arrival and reason for lateness is recorded. If they arrive between 9.00 am and 9.10 am then they will be coded 'L' late mark.

At 9.10am the registers officially close. In accordance with the regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a 'U' unauthorised late mark. If your child is going to be late, it is Parent/Careral responsibility to inform us as soon as possible. This can be done by leaving a message:

- preferably on our answer phone
- at the school office from 8am

## TERM TIME ABSENCE

The Department of Education (DfE) has amended the regulations governing requests for holidays in term time. With effect from 1st September 2013, amendments to the Education (Pupil registration) (England) Regulations 2006 make it clear that Headteachers MAY NOT grant any holidays or other absences during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The Academy of Woodlands WILL NOT authorise any holiday or absence at all except in the event of exceptional circumstances such as the wedding or funeral of immediate family. 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 Headteacher's discretion. All requests need to be submitted in writing to Head of School.

Should you choose to remove your child during term time without authorisation you are not only disrupting your child's education but are also at risk of receiving a penalty fine.

From September 2013, the DfE has amended the Education (Penalty notices) (England) Regulations 2007, so that any Parent/Carer/carer who receives a Penalty Notice for taking their child out of school during term time will have to pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. Failure to pay a fixed penalty notice could result in prosecution.

As we are, by law required to comply with these amendments to the regulations, which affect all absences from school during term time taken after 1st September 2013.

Thank you for your continuing support in this important matter.

### **Unauthorised Absences**

If your child incurs 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence in a six week period ( this includes O"s" & U "s") a referral will automatically be made to AASSA and a Penalty Notice will be issued to each Parent/Carer/carer within the household. You will receive a £60.00 fine, increasing to £120.00 if not paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the fine will result in a court prosecution for your child's non-school attendance

### **Medical Appointments**

The school must be informed in advance of any medical appointments, unless it is an emergency. To cause the least disruption to your child's education we encourage Parent/Carers to arrange any medical appointments outside school times e.g. before/after school, during school holidays or at break/lunchtimes. Written evidence must be provided whenever possible. If attendance is low then it is imperative that evidence is provided to prevent 'unauthorised' absence being recorded.

Parent/Carers must collect their children and bring them back in again when attending appointments during the school day. Parent/Carers should come to the office, where the office staff will contact the classroom and ask that the child comes down to reception to meet their Parent/Carer/carer. The school will sign the child out and then back in again when they return.

If a child has an appointment in a morning or afternoon session and does not attend school for the other session, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence unless evidence has been provided and it has been agreed by the school.

## **TYPES OF ABSENCE**

Every half-day absence from school has to be coded by school (see 'understanding the attendance codes' below), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes:

- keeping children off school unnecessarily
- another member of the family is ill or has a medical appointment
- Parent/Carer cannot get the child to school
- the child refuses to come to school or wants to stay at home
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained or requested
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- shopping, looking after other children, or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed

- your child attends a medical/dental appointment for more than half a day without written proof that this is necessary
- the weather is bad
- the family have overslept, had a late night or a bad night's sleep
- there are problems with uniform/clothing

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between school, the Parent/Carers and the child. If a Parent/Carer thinks their child is reluctant to attend school then we can work with that family; we can offer support within school via our Attendance Officer and/or Pastoral Team. In addition we can use outside agencies to help if required, such as the School Nurse or the Attendance Advisory Practitioner.

### Understanding the attendance codes

The method of maintaining the class registers is through the SIMS Attendance Module. Class teachers complete a registration sheet twice daily and return it to the office. Reasons for absence are recorded using the relevant codes shown below.

/	Attended morning session	\	Attended afternoon session
L	Arrived late during 10 minute period the register was open	U	Arrived late after registers closed
C	Other authorised circumstances (bereavement, agreed special occasions, performances, other approved absences not covered by other codes)	O	Unauthorised absence, not covered by any other code
H	Family Holiday - authorised	G	Family holiday – not authorised
B	Educated off site (Not dual registration)	E	Excluded
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointments)	M	Medical and Dental Appointments
P	Approved sporting activity	S	Approved study leave
R	Day of religious observance for the religious body to which the parents belong	T	Traveller Absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Y	School closure (exceptional)

## THE LAW

By law, all children of compulsory school age must get a suitable, full-time education. As a parent, you are responsible for making sure this happens, either by registering your child at a school or by making other arrangements which provide a suitable full-time education.

Once your child is registered at a school you are responsible for making sure he or she attends regularly. If your child fails to attend regularly - even if they miss school without you knowing - you are committing an offence and the Local Authority (LA) may take legal action against you.

The LA may decide to prosecute a parent if this happens:

- Parents can be fined up to £2,500 or imprisoned for failing to ensure that their child attends school regularly.

- Magistrates can also impose a Parenting Order, which means that the parent has to attend a counselling and guidance programme, usually a parenting class.
- A penalty notice of £60 may be issued (by the LA, school or police) as an alternative to prosecution. This rises to £120 if unpaid after 28 days. Failure to pay will normally lead to prosecution.

Medway LA employs Attendance Advisory Practitioners (AAPs) to help them carry out their statutory duties. AAPs will make home visits and assess the problem in the wider family context.

The Headteacher and the Governing Body are responsible for this policy and its implementation. The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

Further information can be found at

[www.medway.gov.uk/info/200164/school\\_information/358/school\\_attendance/2](http://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200164/school_information/358/school_attendance/2)