



The Academy of Woodlands

Woodlands Road, Gillingham

Kent ME7 2DU

Tel: 0300 065 8200

www.theacademyofwoodlands.co.uk

Head of School: Mrs C Brown
Executive Headteacher: Mrs E Poad

2024

Dear Parents/Guardians,

The Academy of Woodlands hold high expectations around learners' attendance, all learners are expected to maintain a minimum of 96% attendance throughout the school year. Regular attendance at school is important for learning, however, we realise there will be times when absence is unavoidable. This letter outlines our expectation around attendance as well as your responsibilities as parents/carers and The Academy of Woodland's strategy for dealing with low learner attendance.

Changes to the DfE Working Together to Improve School Attendance (Statutory Guidance)

"Working Together to Improve School Attendance" is now a statutory requirement, obligating all schools to adhere to the guidance. The 2024 updates to the DfE's attendance guidance are designed to foster a more supportive, communicative, and collaborative environment for enhancing school attendance. The procedures that schools must follow are detailed in the document, emphasising the importance of parents and carers working alongside schools to address the underlying causes of absenteeism and to encourage a culture of consistent attendance.

Additionally, please be aware that Penalty Notice Fines (PNF) are set to increase. These fines are issued to parents or carers when a child has frequent absences from school without a valid excuse. The funds from these fines do not go directly to the schools but instead support local authorities and administrative processes related to managing school attendance.

If you would like to read the guidance, please click the following link:

[Working together to improve school attendance applies from 19 August 2024 .pdf](#)
publishing.service.gov.uk

Types of Absence

Each absence is classified as either authorised or unauthorised, and both have an impact on a learner's attendance rate. Learners who have an attendance rate of 90% or less will be required to present medical evidence for absences related to illness or injury, this could be in the form of a copy of a prescription or a card with a scheduled appointment, among other things.

The following reasons are example of unauthorised absence:

- care for family members
- days out to theme parks or to attend concerts/shows
- parents' work commitments or business trips
- holidays taken in term time (including long weekends taken on Fridays and/or Mondays)
- parental illness

Absence and First-Day Call

If your child is too unwell to attend school, you should inform us via Studybugs or email, by 8.30 on the first day of absence, you then need to provide updates on any further days they are absent, this can be done by phone or email. If we have not been given a reason, we will call and email until one is provided. We understand it is not always possible to have medical appointments outside of school hours, if your child has a medical appointment during school time, please let us know in advance and send in a copy of any appointment letter/card or text you have regarding the appointment.

A welfare check will be conducted by the pastoral team if the school is not able to ascertain why a child is absent.

Minor Illness

If your child has a cough, cold or a headache, we still expect them to attend school. If you are concerned, please call, or email the school and we will monitor them throughout the day. Please be assured, staff will look after your child and will contact you if they are concerned in anyway.

Mental Health

We understand that many of our learner's struggle with their mental health and often feel they cannot attend because of this, we are able to support them with this in school. If your child is struggling, please reach out to us, you can contact their form tutor, or any member of our Pastoral team and we will support them.

Welfare Checks

As part of our safeguarding and pastoral offer, where a learner has been absent from school for 5 days, we will contact the parent/carer and arrange a home visit. The home visit will allow us to discuss any concerns and reasons as to why the child is not in school and support will be offered. We have a range of interventions that we can discuss, as the longer a child is out of school, the more anxious they will become thus making reintegration back into school difficult.

Emergency Occasions

There are some circumstances, such as bereavement, family issues, etc., when it may be in the best interests of the child for them to be absent. We will be empathetic to such requirements, and they will be handled on an individual basis.

Punctuality

Please be mindful that our morning registration begins at 8.40, if you transport your child to school, they should be dropped off in time to attend this session, when learners are late, they find it harder to settle into the routine of the day. Being late also means they miss key messages and teaching which continues to have an effect on their learning for the rest of the lesson or day.

Requests for absence in term-time

Any absences throughout the academic year must be approved by the head teacher. Prior to the absence, a request for leave of absence must be e-mailed to the School Office. The decision on whether the absence is authorised rests solely with the Head Teacher. Unless there are extraordinary circumstances, schools are now prohibited from authorising any holidays taken during term time. The head teacher will decide what qualifies as extraordinary, and the school will require proof of those circumstances to be included with the request for leave of absence e-mail.

Working in partnership with Attendance Advisory Service to Schools and Academies

The Academy of Woodlands, in conjunction with Medway Council Attendance Advisory Service to Schools and Academies (AASSA) will be monitoring your child's attendance. In the event of 10 unauthorised sessions recorded, a referral may be made to AASSA. Failure to ensure your child's regular attendance at school may result in prosecution in the courts or a penalty notice being issued. ***Please see the infographic on page 5 for an update on the new penalty notice fines. Please note, penalty notice fines are set out by the Government, not schools and schools are duty bound to adhere to the guidance in place.***

We really hope that you will find this letter to be informative and helpful in helping all our learners to access their full education and experience future success and we thank you for your continued support.

Kind regards,



*Mrs Brown
Head of School
The Academy of Woodlands*

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ATTENDANCE UPDATES

Working Together to Improve School Attendance will become statutory guidance on 19 August 2024, leading to changes in attendance regulations.

ALL SCHOOLS ARE DUTY BOUND TO ADHERE TO THIS STATUTORY GUIDANCE



WHAT IS WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE?

This is guidance from the Department for Education (DfE). This guidance is statutory, and schools, trusts, governing bodies, and local authorities must have regard to it as part of their efforts to maintain high levels of school attendance.

PENALTY NOTICE FINES ARE CHANGING

- FIRST OFFENCE** - The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or irregular attendance the amount will be £150 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.
- SECOND OFFENCE** (within 3 years) - The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or irregular attendance the amount will be £160 per parent, per child to be paid within 28 days. No reduced rate will be offered.
- THIRD OFFENCE AND ANY FURTHER OFFENCES** (within 3 years) - The third time an offence is committed for Term Time Leave or irregular attendance a Penalty Notice will not be issued, and the case will be presented straight to the Magistrates Court. Magistrates: fines can be up to £2500 per parent, per child. **Cases found guilty in Magistrates' court can show on a parent's future DBS certificate, due to failure to safeguard a child's education.**



10 SESSIONS (5 DAYS) OF UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE IN A 10 WEEK PERIOD

Penalty Notice Fines will be considered when there has been 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10-week period.



UNAUTHORISED LEAVE IN TERM TIME

Requests for leave due to exceptional circumstances must be made in writing to the Head Teacher, detailing the reasons why the holiday cannot take place outside of the school term and where appropriate, evidence will need to be provided to support the request.

