



**Woodbrook Vale School
Policy Document**

Attendance Policy

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Whole School Attendance Policy

1 Overview

This policy has been produced in accordance with Department for Education (DfE) guidance; the Education Act and education regulations for pupil registration in England (2016). The policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

- 1.1 Woodbrook Vale School has very high expectations regarding attendance. We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for our students and recognise this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based on the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will students be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High achievement depends on good attendance.
- 1.2 The whole school community, students, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and school Trustees have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance. The purpose of this policy is to clarify everyone's part in this.
- 1.3 The policy has been drawn up based on current government and Local Authority guidance and Statutory Regulations. The school will ensure that all stakeholders know of the policy and have access to it.
- 1.4 We will maintain an effective system of incentives and rewards which acknowledge the efforts of students to improve their own attendance and timekeeping and challenges students and parents who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.
- 1.5 We will communicate, in a timely manner, with students, parents and appropriate external agencies to provide information and guidance in order to promote high levels of attendance and punctuality.

2 School's Roles and Responsibilities

- 2.1 All staff at Woodbrook Vale School have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all our students are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.
- 2.2 The school will use Local Authority guidance regarding the authorisation of term time absences and the proposed use of Fixed Penalty notices, as a strategy to address absence.
- 2.3 The Assistant Headteacher (Inclusion and Standards) will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. The Attendance Officer will ensure that up-to-date attendance data and issues are shared with the Senior Leadership Team. Data will be made regularly available, through our data communication system Go4Schools, to all staff, students and parents/carers. The Governing Board will be made fully aware of attendance data and targets. The Attendance Officer will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that interventions are in place to deal with any difficulties.
- 2.4 **Registration.** The school is required by law to mark the attendance register twice each day; The morning register will be completed promptly at 8.30am by the form tutor and at 1.20pm by the period 5 subject teacher. The registers will close at 8.45 am and 1.25pm. Any student arriving after the closing of the registers will receive an unauthorised late mark. Any child arriving late, but before the closing of the register will be marked as late. It is the expectation of the school that subject teachers' complete registers using Go4Schools accurately and within five minutes in all other lessons.

2.5 Punctuality. Students marked as late, where no explanation has been received from home, will receive a stage 2 late break time detention the same day. Three late marks will result in a stage 5 after school detention supervised by a member of the pastoral team

Categorising Absence.

A mark will be made in respect of each child following the close of the registers. Any child who is not present will be coded as unauthorised unless permission has been given for this absence in advance, or the reason of absence is given and accepted by the school as legitimate. Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the school at a later date, the register will be amended with the appropriate code at that time.

- 2.6** Woodbrook Vale School recognises the clear links between attendance and achievement and that inappropriate authorisation of absence can be as damaging to a child's education as authorised absence in potentially sending a message that any reason for non-school attendance is acceptable.
- 2.7** If absence is frequent or continuous, (with the exception of a long term illness supported by appropriate medical evidence) the Attendance Officer and/or Assistant Headteacher will discuss with parents/carers the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note of explanation from a student's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.
- 2.8** It is the parent/carers responsibility to notify the school of all student absence and lateness. Parents are expected to telephone the attendance line or email the designated email address for attendance via the school website as soon as possible to inform the school if a child will be absent or late. This should happen on each day that this applies. Students will be categorised as late if they have not arrived to registration by 8.35am. Students arriving after 8.35am must report to the Attendance Office to sign into school. If they fail to do so they will be marked as absent.
- 2.9** The Attendance Officer will monitor lateness and punctuality. Parents will be informed of lateness by a text message. Patterns of lateness will be monitored and appropriate sanctions will be applied in line with the school's Behaviour Policy. Persistent lateness will be referred to the Attendance Improvement Officer. This may result in a Fixed Penalty Notice.

3 The School's Systems and Strategies for Managing and Improving Attendance

- 3.1** Parents/carers are regularly reminded in newsletters and school meetings about the importance of good attendance and its links to achievement.
- 3.2** The attendance officer will co-ordinate checking of registers against the telephone messages / emails received in line with safeguarding procedures and in order for fire sheets to be generated.
- 3.3** It is the parent/carer's responsibility to contact the school on each day of absence. If this does not happen, a morning text will be sent to the first contact for that student to establish a reason for the absence. A second text will be sent if a reply has not been received by the afternoon. If we are concerned about the absence, we may contact other primary contacts.
- 3.4** Woodbrook Vale School has procedures in place to deal with unexplained absences. If there has been no contact with parents for an unexplained absence for a third consecutive day, the Attendance Officer may complete a home visit or contact Leicestershire Police to request a Safe and Well Check.

3.5 If absences persist and attendance falls below 92% a letter may be sent to the parent/carer expressing concern and showing a pattern of absences if applicable. If attendance continues to decrease and attendance falls below 88% a second letter may be sent out requesting medical evidence for future absences. The attendance officer will always discuss cases with the Assistant Headteacher (Pastoral) prior to letters being sent. A written record will be made when any telephone call is made about attendance.

3.6 Penalty Notices/Prosecution for Non-School Attendance.

As a school we commission the services of Access Education Solutions who follow the Local Authority procedures and Code of Conduct for using Penalty Notices. The Local Authority will consider the issue of a Penalty Notice or prosecution in those cases where a student's attendance has fallen below the level determined as the trigger for legal intervention and it is considered likely that the issue of such a notice will bring about an improvement in attendance.

4 Parents' Responsibilities

4.1 The Law. The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

"The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause [the student] to receive efficient full-time education suitable:

- to his/her age, ability and aptitude and
- to any special needs they may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise"

(Note: for educational purposes the term parent is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day to day care of the child).

Parents should:

4.2 Ensure their children arrive at school on time dressed in the correct uniform and with the correct equipment each day.

4.3 Work in partnership with the school, for example attending parent meetings and consultations and adhering to the home-school agreement.

4.4 Contact the school without delay if their child is absent or late.

4.5 Contact the school if they are concerned about any aspects of their children's school lives; Woodbrook Vale School will endeavour to support parents to address their concerns.

5 Students' Responsibilities

5.1 All students should be aware of the importance of regular school attendance. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school regularly, they should speak to their Form Tutor, Head of Year or the Attendance Officer.

5.2 Students should attend all their lessons on time, ready to learn. Students have a responsibility for reporting to the Student Office if they arrive late to school.

6 Trustees' Responsibilities

6.1 The Governing Board shall make arrangements for ensuring that their functions relating to the conduct of the school are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of young people who are students at the school.

7 Leave of Absence

7.1 The Government has issued new regulations in September 2013 regarding leave of absence. Therefore, non-attendance (however short or infrequent) is treated seriously. It is the policy of the school to only sanction non-attendance during term time in exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

7.2 Parents do not have any entitlement to take their children on holiday during term time. Applications for Leave of Absence must be made in advance and failure to do so will result in the absence being coded as unauthorised. Any request for leave must demonstrate that there are exceptional circumstances and the Headteacher may ask for evidence of this. If leave of absence is refused but the student is absent during the period of time requested, the absence will be unauthorised and may result in a Fixed Penalty Notice.

Exceptional circumstances are defined very narrowly. The Department for Education has made it clear that certain events (e.g. birthdays) will not normally be considered as an exceptional circumstance. Absence may be authorised in the following examples of exceptional circumstances:

- A student is to participate in an approved performance for which a licence has been granted by the Local Authority and signed by the Headteacher.
- A student is involved in an exceptional special occasion. The individual circumstances of the particular case and the student's overall pattern of attendance will be considered. This will be at the discretion of the Headteacher.
- Where the school is satisfied that the student is too ill to attend
- Where the student has a medical appointment that cannot be made outside of school hours and is supported by relevant documentation.
- Where there is an unavoidable cause for the absence which is beyond the family's control.
- The absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parents belong. Prior permission must be sought by the parent from the Headteacher.
- The student is of no fixed abode, his/her parents are engaged in a trade which require him/her to travel, the student has attended school as often as the nature of the trade permits and, has attended 200 sessions in the preceding 12 months.
- In other exceptional circumstances, such as a family bereavement. In these situations' authorisation of absence will be time limited.

7.3 Unauthorised absence

Request for leave of absence will usually remain unauthorised if:

- there is persistent/sporadic absence and attendance falls below 92%
- no explanation has been given by the parent/carer
- the school is not satisfied with the explanation
- the student is absent for unexceptional reasons such as a birthday/anniversary / term-time holiday

7.4 Legal Sanctions

The Local Authority 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 headteacher, 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.

7.5 Medical appointments during school time

A letter/appointment card/hospital letter must be provided for the attention of the Attendance Officer prior to a medical appointment during the school day. If appointments have to be made during the day students should, where possible, always come into school before and after the appointment. Students will always be provided with a sign out slip and must sign out at the Student Office when they leave for the appointment.

7.6 Request for medical evidence

Where there are concerns regarding a student's absence due to prolonged, sporadic or frequent illness the school will be justified in requesting medical evidence. Medical evidence is likely to be requested when a student's absence falls below 88%. This can be in the form of a Doctor's appointment card, a prescription box from medicine or a label from medication. In line with Department for Education guidance for supporting medical conditions in school the school may draw up an Individual Healthcare Plan.

Medical evidence can help the school to provide external support for students where long term absence is the result of medical needs. This may result in a referral to the Local Authorities medical needs team. The trigger for this is fifteen consecutive day's absence and usually requires supporting medical evidence from a healthcare professional.

7.7 Leaving the Site during the school day

No student is allowed to leave the site without permission during the school day. If in an exceptional circumstance the parent requires their child to leave the school site they must confirm this in writing and, subject to school approval, assume responsibility for their child during this time. If a student truants from the school site parents will be notified and asked to locate their child. Truancy from school will be dealt with in line with the school's Behaviour Policy.

Where a student absconds and there are safeguarding concerns the school will advise the parent/carer to contact the police or, where appropriate, contact the police on the parent/carer's behalf. Where a student is subject to a Child Protection Plan a Designated Safeguarding Lead will contact Social care.

7.8 Approved Educational Activity

Where a student is engaged in off-site approved educational activities, the Attendance Officer will check his/her attendance on a daily basis before entering the appropriate code in the register. Where a child is educated off site for example through the Loughborough Inclusion Partnership or via Willowbank Hospital School the provider informs the school on a daily basis so that marks can be recorded accurately.

8 Collection and Analysis of Data

The Attendance Officer will ensure that attendance data is complete, accurate, analysed and reported to the Senior Leadership Team, parents/carers and governing board.

This data will inform the school's future practice to improve attendance and prevent disaffection. Attendance is monitored by year group and by reason for absence. It is analysed by gender, ethnicity, Special Educational Need, Pupil Premium and if the student is a looked after child.

Accurate attendance returns are made to the DfE (via the Local Authority and SIMS) within the stipulated time frame.

9 Persistent Absence (PA)

A child is defined as persistently absent by the DfE if they are absent for 10 per cent or more of school time. The Attendance Officer will monitor the attendance of persistently absent students. Students with attendance below 92% will be clearly identified and the reasons for their absences addressed using a range of support mechanisms within the school as well as statutory interventions, which may include a Fixed Penalty Notice. A half termly report is submitted to the Local Authority for students who are defined as a 'Pupil Missing Education'.

10 Reviewing the Policy

The school will review this policy on an annual basis.