



WOODSIDE SCHOOL

Attendance policy for all Woodside School

Independent School Standards: paragraphs 15 and 34.

Policy content includes:

- ✳ how we promote pupils' attendance and punctuality
- ✳ our procedure for following up absence
- ✳ how we monitor attendance and the role of parents.

This attendance policy pays regard to national guidance issued by the Department for Education (DfE), including ['Working together to improve school attendance'](#) (February 2024).

**Last external
review**

September
2024

**Next external
review**

September
2025

Latest update	September 2024
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INTRODUCTION

Absence from school affects the pattern of a pupil's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence or later arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring a pupil's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law. At Woodside Schools, we set clear targets for school attendance of 95% in order to ensure that our pupils come to school every day and make the best possible progress. We are mindful, however, that all of our pupils have Education Care Health Plans as a result of having social, emotional and mental health needs, most as a result of experiencing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Therefore, some of our pupils face complex barriers to attendance, which could be a result of a mental health condition or their Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The expectations of attendance for these pupils are the same, however we recognise that they might require additional support.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our 'keeping our pupils safe' policy.

PROMOTING REGULAR ATTENDANCE

Our school aim to promote a high level of awareness of the need for regular and prompt attendance. We:

- advise families of the schools' expectations during the induction meetings for new pupils and on progress days
- report to families on their child's attendance in their achievement reports
- contact families every day to clarify the reason for a child's absence from school; this will happen as soon as is practicable on the first day, the reason for absence will then be recorded on the register. If we are unable to obtain the reason for a pupil being absent, we will attempt to contact the pupil's emergency contacts. We ask for at least two emergency contacts for every pupil. At this stage, if we have been unable to contact the family or emergency contacts, a home visit will be carried out. As a last resort, if the school has not been able to ascertain where a pupil is after following the steps above, the pupil will be classed as a 'missing child', and they will be reported to the police
- contact with home will also always be made should a pupil's attendance be a cause for concern, with the aim of establishing the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance, thinking together to establish how we can overcome

the barriers

- will seek support for pupils/families where out of school barriers are identified, which could include a voluntary early help assessment

- work together with multi-agency teams in order to improve attendance levels, including for those pupils who have social workers and for those who have persistent or severe absence. We will consider making reasonable adjustments to policies and practice to help meet the needs of pupils who are struggling to attend. This may include transport arrangements, daily routines, an increased access to support in school and a time-limited phased return – which would always be agreed with the local authority
- celebrate good attendance at assemblies
- reward good or improving attendance through termly attendance certificates and other events.

UNDERSTANDING TYPES OF ABSENCES

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the family), as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**.

This is why information about the cause of absence is required.

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

- families keeping their child off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never properly been explained
- pupils who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- activities such as shopping, looking after other pupils or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been formally agreed.

Pupils can sometimes be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best resolved between the school, family and pupil. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school, then we will work with the family to understand the cause of the problem.

When a pupil’s attendance drops below 90%, this will usually be addressed through informal conversations with a senior leader and/or Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). Where there is a lack of engagement and/or the attendance continues to drop then a more formal conversation will be had with families to highlight the need for immediate action and to be clear about the next steps and potential need for communication with the local authority and/or the relevant attendance support team in order to request further support for the pupil and family.

If attendance levels are not improving, an initial letter will be sent to the family (decision on sending these are made on a case-by-case basis), highlighting the cause for concern.

We recognise that absence that is below 90% is doing considerable damage to any pupil's education and we need the fullest support and cooperation from families to deal with this. Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year). Severe absence is where a pupil is missing 50% or more of school.

If the pupil's attendance still does not improve, a further warning letter will be sent and the matter will be raised with the pupil's placing authority and, if possible, the relevant attendance support team.

PUNCTUALITY

Good time-keeping is a vital skill for life. Being on time helps a pupil to be calm, relaxed and happy in school. Poor punctuality is unacceptable. If a pupil misses the start of the day, they can miss work and do not spend time with their teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late-arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the pupil and can also encourage absence.

The register is a statutory document and is taken twice a day. Each day counts as two sessions of attendance.

Timings are made clear to families and local authority transport teams.

The school day starts at 08:45 and ends at 15:00.

Registers are marked at all sites at 09:15. If a pupil arrives after the registration period they will be formally marked in as late. At 09:45 the registers will be closed.

In accordance with the regulations, if a pupil arrives after that time, they will receive a mark to note that they are on site, but this will not count as a 'present' mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence.

It is essential that pupils arriving and leaving school with a family member outside the normal hours are signed in and out from the school offices. These records are used in the case of fire/emergency.

If a pupil has a persistent late record, families will be asked to meet with the relevant leader to resolve the problem. However, families can approach the assistant principal at any time if they are having problems getting their child to school on time.

We encourage good punctuality by being positive role models to our pupils and through celebrating and rewarding good punctuality, as we do attendance.

As special schools catering for a large proportion of pupils who arrive to school from a wide range of locations on transport provided by placing

authorities' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) teams, we acknowledge that sometimes

transport providers arrive late to school. This can be for reasons beyond pupils' and families' control, such as heavy traffic or the late arrival of

escorts. Pupils will not be penalised for lateness that is beyond their control.

Pupils who travel independently must ensure they make suitable arrangements to get to school on time.

ILLNESS AND MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS

Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours. We should be notified of these appointments in advance. If it is necessary for a pupil to be out of school for this reason, the pupil should wherever possible return to school directly after the appointment and not take the entire day off.

Long-term medical conditions requiring regular and repeated visits to medical professionals during term time need to be evidenced, reviewed and monitored by a senior leader.

If a pupil is absent from school the parent/carer must follow the following procedure:

1. Contact the relevant school site as soon as possible on the morning of the first day of absence before 09.15
2. Send in a written note explaining an absence of more than one day when the pupil returns to school

For unavoidable medical appointments during the school day - the parent/carer must phone us or send us a note in advance of the appointment.

If a pupil is absent, we will:

- contact parents & carers every day to clarify the reason for a pupil's absence from school; this will happen as soon as is practicable on the first day and the reason for absence will then be recorded on the register.
- attempt to contact the pupil's emergency contacts if we are unable to obtain the reason for a pupil being absent (we ask for at least two emergency contacts for every pupil)
- carry out a home visit if we have been unable to contact the family or emergency contacts.

As a final resort, if we have not been able to ascertain where a pupil is after following the steps above, the pupil will be classed as a 'missing child', and they will be reported to the police.

We will always invite the family in to discuss the situation with a senior leader if a pupil has persistent or severe absence. We may then consider referring the matter to the relevant Education Welfare Services team if attendance fails to improve.

HOLIDAYS DURING TERM TIME

- **There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday. It is strongly discouraged by the government, placing authorities and Woodside Schools.**
- It is the family's obligation to apply to the schools (in writing or at a meeting arranged with an assistant principal) for a leave of absence. It must be made by the parent or carer with whom the pupil normally resides. All applications for leave must be made in advance and are at the final discretion of the senior vice principal (safeguarding).
- In deciding, leaders will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave in term time as well as the attendance and punctuality record of the pupil.
- We strongly recommend that families gain consent for any holiday in term time *before* booking the holiday. Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school or in excess of that agreed will be classed as unauthorised.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR ABSENCE IN OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES

- Sudden serious circumstances do rarely occur, when it is impossible for a family to bring their child to school.
- It is essential that we are told about these circumstances immediately so that the appropriate code can be noted in the register.

MONITORING ABSENCE

- All staff are committed to working with families to reduce absence and ensure pupils have the highest possible levels of attendance.
- All pupils who have 100% attendance and punctuality over a term will receive a special certificate in our final reward assembly of the term.
- As per the statutory attendance guidance, Woodside School now has a statutory duty to share daily attendance data with the DfE, collected via Wonde. We are also legally required to share

information from our register with local authorities who may also use other software systems, such as Studybugs, to collect data for pupils who reside in that borough. Further

details on how this data is collected and used can be found in the [guidance for sharing daily pupil attendance data](#).

- Woodside School keeps pupils' placing authorities informed of all their pupils' attendance. We are obliged to inform placing authorities when a pupil is absent for 10 school days or more but actually keep them informed of all our pupils' attendance records if they present **any** cause for concern.
- The relevant senior leader or DSL meets with families of pupils whose absence or punctuality are a cause for concern to explain the consequences of severe or persistent absence and the potential need for legal intervention in the future, however the main focus will be trying to identify what support can be offered in order to remove barriers and improve attendance.
- Any pupil who is absent for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions will always get immediate attention from the DSL.
- We know that pupils who are absent from education for prolonged periods of time and/or on repeat occasions can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding concerns and can eventually lead to pupils being missing in education.
- There may be a few occasions whereby a pupil's health means they need reasonable adjustments or support because it is complex or long term. We can seek medical evidence to better understand the pupil's needs as per the statutory guidance [supporting pupils at school with medical conditions](#).
- Leaders monitor and analyse attendance data on a weekly basis to identify patterns and trends, including pupils at risk of poor attendance and to develop strategies to support individual/cohorts of pupils. As schools, we have a duty to inform families of their child's attendance and how this can impact on their learning.
- Attendance data is also analysed on a termly and yearly basis at the quality & standards committee meetings, which includes comparison against other settings.

THE ROLE OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

- We communicate with the local authority if a pupil's attendance falls or we become aware of barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs. Where needed, we will work with the local authority to review and amend the EHCP to incorporate the required attendance support.
- Parents & carers are expected to contact the school at an early

stage and to work with staff in resolving any attendance and/or punctuality problems, together. This is nearly always successful.

- If difficulties cannot be resolved this way, we will work with local authority attendance support team to put formal support in place which could include an attendance contract or an education supervision order.
- Support from social care services will be intensified, in particular if absence is severe (below 50%).
- Local authorities may issue a Notice to Improve and/or a penalty notice where support has not been successful.
- If all of the above has not been successful and if other ways of trying to improve the pupil's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, the local authority may look to prosecute families; this could include making the case for a community or parenting order where the parent is convicted to secure engagement with support.
- Full details of the options to enforce attendance at school are available from the pupil's local authority, including details of the National Framework for Penalty Notices.