



School Attendance Policy

For Woodhall Primary School, part of the Unity Schools Partnership

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- **Unity's Safeguarding Policy, September 2018**
- **Woodhall Primary School's Child Protection Procedures, September 2018**

Date of Review:	September 2018
It was ratified by the Woodhall Primary School Local Governing Body on:	29 th November 2018
Date of next Review:	September 2021

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

Introduction

At Woodhall Primary School we believe that the most important factor in fostering good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. This is why we are committed to inspiring a love of learning by providing opportunities that ensure talents are nurtured, needs are met and all can flourish. In order to achieve this, it is important that children attend school every day, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so.

Indeed, the importance of good attendance is heavily supported by research, which demonstrates a direct link between regular school attendance and children going on to lead successful lives. Therefore, the whole school community, parents or carers, teachers, support staff, governors and children, have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of this policy is to clarify everyone's role.

The policy has been drawn up after consultation with the whole community and is based on current government guidance and statutory Regulations. The school will ensure that all members of the community know of the policy and have access to it.

School's roles and responsibilities

All staff at Woodhall Primary School have a role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance, and will work to provide an environment in which all our children 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.

Attendance Leader

The Head teacher will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. The Head teacher will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

Registration

The school is required to mark the attendance register twice each day: once at the start of the day and once at the start of the afternoon session. Class teachers are responsible for the accurate completion of these registers. If a child is absent for registration then class teachers will mark the register with a circle in red pen. Office staff will then complete the register using the prescribed codes (see Appendix 1).

Specific timings are as follows:

- The morning register will be called promptly at 8:55am by each class teacher and a mark will be made during the registration period in respect of each child.
- The morning register will close at 9.15am. Any child who arrives after the closing of the register will be marked with a 'U' which counts as an unauthorised absence. Children who arrive before the morning register closes (after 8.55 but before 9.15) will be marked with an L and will be counted present but will be dealt with under the school's policy on punctuality and lateness (see para. 4.5 on page 7).
- The afternoon register will be called promptly at 1.10pm in lower school and 1.30pm in upper school.
- The registers will close at 1.35pm.

Categorising absence

A mark will be made in respect of each child during registration. Any child who is not present at this time will be marked unauthorised absent unless leave has been granted by the school in advance or the reason for absence is already known and accepted by the school as legitimate. Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the school at a later stage, the register will be amended in such a way that the original entry and the amendment/ correction are distinguishable. The decision about whether the absence should be authorised or unauthorised rests with the Head teacher.

As indicated above, as a school we recognise the clear links between attendance and attainment. However, we also recognise the direct link between attendance and safeguarding. If absence is frequent or continuous, we will challenge parents or carers about the need and reasons for their children's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a child's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence **will always rest with the school and the Headteacher.**

If no explanation about an absence is received by the school **within 2 weeks**, the absence will remain unauthorised. The school will write once to parents or carers requesting an explanation. If no explanation is received the absence will remain unauthorised and may be taken up by the Educational Welfare Service.

Absences will be authorised in the following circumstances:

- where leave has been granted by the school in advance
- a child is to participate in an approved performance for which a licence has been granted by the Local Authority
- a child is involved in an **exceptional** special occasion – in authorising such an absence the individual circumstances of the particular case and the child's overall pattern of attendance will be considered

- in **exceptional** circumstances, permission has been granted for a family holiday for which the parents have sought permission in advance
- where the school is satisfied that the child is too ill to attend
- where the child has a medical appointment (although parents should be encouraged to make these out of school hours wherever possible, and to return their child to school immediately afterwards – or send him/her to school beforehand)
- where there is an unavoidable cause for the absence which is beyond the family's control e.g. extreme weather conditions
- the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs
- the child lives more than two miles (if he/she is under eight) or three miles (if he/she has reached eight) and no suitable transport arrangements have been made by the Local Authority (this situation does not apply to children whose parents or carers have actively chosen to send them to a school out of their catchment area)
- the child is of no fixed abode, his/her parent is engaged in a trade which requires him/her to travel, the child has attended school as often as the nature of the trade permits **and**, having reached the age of six, he/she has attended 200 sessions in the preceding 12 months
- in other **exceptional circumstances** (e.g. a family bereavement) and **for a very limited period**.

Except in the circumstances described above, absences will be unauthorised. Some examples of reasons for **not** authorising absence would be:

- no explanation has been given by the parent or carer
- the school is not satisfied with the explanation
- the child is staying at home to mind the house
- the child is shopping during school hours
- the child is absent for unexceptional reasons e.g. a birthday
- the child is absent from school on a family holiday without prior permission
- the child has been stopped during a truancy sweep and is unable (or the parent/ carer is unable) to give a satisfactory reason for the absence.

Approved educational activity

Where a child is engaged in off-site approved educational activities, the school will check his/her attendance on a daily basis before entering the appropriate code in the register.

Staff training

The Headteacher will ensure that all staff responsible for taking registers, including any temporary or supply staff, are given guidance to enable them to perform the task accurately.

Collection and analysis of data

The Headteacher will ensure that attendance data is complete, accurate, analysed and reported to the staff, parents and the Governing Body. The data will inform the school's future practice to improve attendance.

Accurate attendance returns are made to the DfE within the stipulated period.

Systems and strategies for managing and improving attendance

Attendance has a very high profile at Woodhall Primary School. Parents are regularly reminded in newsletters and school meetings about the importance of good attendance and its links to attainment.

First-day calling

The school has in place a system of first-day calling. This means that parents or carers will be telephoned on the first day a child is absent without explanation to establish a reason for the absence. Parents or carers are asked to telephone the school before 8.30am to give a reason for their child's absence. If we have not received a phone call by 10.00am, our attendance officer, will telephone to establish a reason. This helps to identify, at an early stage, children who do not have a good reason for absence or who may be absent without their parents or carers' knowledge

School Strategies to Tackle Absence

Where there is an emerging pattern of absence the school will contact parents or carers to discuss the reasons for the absences. If appropriate, plans will be put in place to resolve any difficulties and improve the attendance within a specified time limit. It will be explained to parents or carers that any future absences will be unauthorised unless there is clear evidence of a good reason for them. A Penalty Notice will be issued via County for 6 or more sessions of unauthorised absence. There are 2 sessions per day, morning and afternoon.

Referral to the Educational Welfare Officers

Following strategies being put in place to tackle absence, if there continues to be unauthorised absences by the end of the specified time (or sooner if the child is failing to attend school at all), the matter will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer. Regulations (Education Pupil Regulations 2006) require schools to inform the Local Authority of every child who has been continuously absent without a good reason (i.e. the absence is unauthorised) for 5 days or more. The Educational Welfare Officer uses the Fast Track protocol to improve absence.

Lateness and punctuality

Children are expected to arrive at school, and be in the correct room for registration, on time every day. It is very disruptive to their own education and that of others in their class, if they are late. Children who arrive after the register closes will be marked absent for the whole session (a session being a morning or an afternoon). This absence will be unauthorised unless the school is satisfied that there is a legitimate reason for the child to have been late. Such a reason will not include things such as missing the bus, clothes in the washing machine or lost shoes. A child who is persistently absent by reason of lateness will be dealt with in the same way as another child with an emerging pattern of absence. If the matter is not resolved quickly, it will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer.

Children who arrive late for school but before the register closes should arrive through the school office and not through the classroom as this will be locked. Classroom doors will be locked at 8:55am. This is vital for health and safety reasons because we need to know who is in the building at any given time. Children arriving after the register closes should also report to the school office and be signed in by a parents or carers

For the same health and safety reasons it is important that children leaving the premises legitimately (e.g. for a medical appointment), or returning to school later in the day, also report to the office and are signed out/in by a parent or carer.

Term-time holidays

The Education Act 1996 requires children to attend school unless there is a good reason, for example, if they are ill, or leave has been given by the Head teacher. The rules around asking a school for leave to take child(ren) on holiday during term time are set out in The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended by The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 (which came into force on 1 September 2013). The 2013 Regulations removed references to family holidays and extended leave, including the reference to 'ten school days for the purpose of a holiday' from the 2006 Regulations. The amendments are clear that Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless 'exceptional circumstances' exist. Essentially term times are for education, and with 175 days off including weekends and school holidays, it is reasonable to expect events and holidays to be scheduled outside of term time.

We acknowledge that exceptional circumstances may occur from time to time and parents or carers will be able to legitimately request leave of absence. The school would expect, wherever possible, for this to be at least two weeks in advance of any planned absence.

As a school will only consider authorising absence for:

- service personnel e.g. police force, armed forces etc. and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays during term-time

All requests for a leave of absence will be responded to in writing giving the reasons for the decision. We will not authorise any leave of absence during periods of national tests

i.e. SATs and Y1 Phonics Check.

Extended leave of absence

Where extended leave of absence is granted, for whatever reason, there will be an expectation that the child/ren undertakes some school-set work during this period.

Parents or carers' responsibilities

The prime responsibility for ensuring children receive an appropriate and full-time education rests with parents or carers (defined by the Education Act 1996 as those with parental responsibility and those who have the care of a child), who will be supported and encouraged by us.

As a school we expect parents or carers to:

- ensure their children attend school regularly and on time
- support their children's attendance by refraining from taking holidays in term time
- not expect the school to automatically agree any requests for leave of absence, and not condone unjustified absence from school.

Parents or carers will also be expected to:

- notify the school on the first day of absence before 8.30am and give an estimation of the expected length of absence
- ensure their child/ren arrive at school on time, properly dressed and with the right equipment for the day, including P.E. kit
- work in partnership with the school, for example by attending parents' meetings and consultations, taking an interest in their children's work and activities
- contact the school without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their child/ren's school lives.
- take their child/ren to the front office if they are late and sign them in the Late Register.

Children' responsibilities

All children 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 class teacher or another trusted adult.

Children should attend all their lessons on time, ready to learn. If they are late, they have a responsibility to follow school procedures.

Governors' responsibilities

The school's local Governing Body makes 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 children who are children at the school.

Conclusion

Regular school attendance is a necessary contributor to ensuring positive outcomes for all children. These include:

- enabling children to enjoy both academic and lifelong success
- enjoy an educational experience that inspires a love of learning
- learn to respect, support and value others
- an ability to persevere to achieve more than others think possible.

Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed every three years by the Headteacher and monitored by the Governing Body.

REGISTER CODES

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Non-compulsory school age absence	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

AN ATTENDANCE GUIDE FOR PARENTS

1. When does my child need to be in School?

Your child should be at school in good time for registration. The morning register will be called promptly at **8:55am** and the afternoon register by **1:30pm**.

2. What happens if my child is late?

Registration closes at **9:15am** in the morning and **1:35pm** in the afternoon.

If your child arrives between **8:55am** and **9:15am** he/she will be marked **late**

If your child arrives after **9:15am** he/she will be marked as **absent**

If your child arrives after **1:30pm** he/she will be marked **late**

If your child arrives after **1:35pm** he/she will be marked **absent**

Pupils who arrive after registration should report to the school office, and sign the Late Book.

3. Does the School need letters explaining my child's absence or will a phone call do?

We would expect a parent to telephone the school on the first day of absence. If you do not phone us, our safeguarding procedures require us to phone you..

4. What reasons will the school accept for absences?

- Illness
- Emergency dental/medical appointment - (Please make routine appointments after school or during the Holidays)
- Day of religious observance
- Family bereavement
- Attending an interview for a job, college, university etc

Except in the case of illness, you should ask for permission for your child to miss school, at least two weeks in advance, giving full details. In cases of recurring absences through illness you may be asked to produce a medical evidence/certificates.

5. What is unacceptable?

The school will not authorise absence for day trips, visiting relatives, shopping, birthdays or looking after brothers or sisters etc.

6. Will the school contact me if my child is absent?

The school operates a first day response to absences: we will phone you by 10:00am if we have not heard from you. This is because we believe it is our responsibility to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance.

If we are concerned about aspects of your child's attendance or punctuality, we will contact you to discuss the best way forward.

7. I am thinking about sending my child on an extended absence for an overseas to visit relatives. What should I do?

The school recognises that such absence can be important for children to keep in touch with their extended family. In such cases, you should contact the Head teacher as soon as possible to discuss the best time for such a visit.

The school would strongly recommend that such absences do not take place during your child's SAT's & Y1 Phonics Screening Check. You need to complete an application form for extended leave of absence and if the Head teacher then approves the visit, the school will set work for your child to complete while away.

As far as possible we will ensure the work set reinforces the educational value of such a visit.

8. What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, through your interest, that you value his/her education. Your child will bring home a school diary each evening. Please ensure you look at it with your child and complete anything required e.g. reading, ready for the next day.

9. My child is trying to avoid coming to school. What should I do?

Contact your child's class teacher, the school's Children and Family Support Manager, Deputy Head teacher or Head teacher, immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem.

AN ATTENDANCE GUIDE FOR CHILDREN

Attending regularly and on time

Regular attendance will help you make the most of the opportunities here at Woodhall School. It will help you:

- keep up with your school work and get the best results you can
- get a job – employers like people who are reliable.
- Remember, your attendance at school is recorded.

Absences

Acceptable reasons for absences include:

- Illness
- Emergency dental/medical appointments (please make routine appointments after school or during the holidays)
- Day of religious observance
- Family bereavement
- Attending an interview for a job, college, university etc

Looking after brothers and sisters, birthdays, general trips such as shopping and helping at those are NOT reasons to be absent from school.

You will need a note from your parents to explain ALL absences from school. You will also need a note if you arrive at school after 9.05 in the morning. If you do not bring a note, or the explanation on the note is unsatisfactory, the absence will count as unauthorised and will be shown on your end of year report.

NEED HELP?

Problems with your school work? Are you being bullied? Are your friends giving you a hard time? Are things difficult at school? Are things difficult at home?

You may feel that missing school is the answer. It is not – it may even make things worse.

TALK TO SOMEONE – your class teacher, another member of staff, your parents. We will do everything we can to help you get over the problem.