



Wood Ley Community Primary School

Attendance Policy For Wood Ley Community Primary School

September 2023

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1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

3.3 The designated team responsible for attendance

The designated senior leadership team are responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated leaders responsible for attendance are Mrs Renwick / Mr Grocott / Miss Kay they can be contacted via 01449616038

3.4 The attendance officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the headteacher/ SLT team when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance officer is Mrs H Green and can be contacted via 01449616038

3.5 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office each morning following morning registration at 9.00 and afternoon following afternoon registration.

NB: In the case of a child being absent at registration, 0 is recorded in red and school admin staff advise on appropriate code following analysis of logged absences on parent mail system. Recording a late attendance code will be completed by school office when child has arrived at school via the front office following the closure of gates and registration period.

3.6 School admin staff

School admin staff will:

- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents to the headteacher in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance
- Access and record absences logged on parent mail system and transfer to school management system and update registers.

3.7 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

3.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once after lunch break. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent (red 0 recorded)
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- For pupils of compulsory school age, whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by **8.50** on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.50 and will be kept open until 9.00. The register for the second session will be taken at the start of afternoon lessons – foundation and KS1 1pm, LKS2 1.10pm and UKS2 1.20pm and will be kept open 10 minutes after the start of each respective afternoon session.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carers must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9am or as soon as practically possible by logging the absence **on parent mail** or calling the school office. A message can be left on the answer phone if unattended.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

Parents / carers should request a **notification of attended absence form** from the school office.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- After the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- Pupils arriving late are recorded in the late book which is monitored and reported to the headteacher. If a pattern of ongoing punctuality issues arise then the school will contact the Education Welfare Officer to support the family.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may contact the police.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels, this will be termly via an end of term attendance report.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 2 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school office. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

Illness, medical and dental appointments - Where the school believes that a child is genuinely unwell the absence will be authorised. When attending a medical or dental appointment it is important that such appointments be made outside school hours unless in extreme, unavoidable cases. Your child must return after or be present in school before such appointments – if a whole session is missed due to a local appointment, then this may not be authorised.

If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, the school may request that parents provide proof that the child is unfit for school. Please note that it is the parents' responsibility to provide such evidence and that a school is not in a position to speak to doctors about this and will not do so. It is not the role / responsibility of schools to prove authenticity but the parents.

Days of religious observance - The school will be sensitive to such requests; once again, parents are required to give notice in advance for these leave of absence requests. Where necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body about authenticity and whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.

Traveller child when the family is travelling - A number of different groups are covered by the generic term Traveller – Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers.

When Traveller families are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision, T coding should be used but it should not be used for any other types of absence by these groups.

To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children it is expected that the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling and be dual registered at that school and the main school. Children from these groups whose families do not travel are expected to register at a school and attend as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly once registered at school.

Weddings – Schools will authorise time for a child to attend the wedding of an immediate family member, such as a parent or sibling as follows: In Suffolk 1 day; outside Suffolk **up to** 3 days to include travel to, the wedding day and travel from.

Family bereavements – The schools will respond sensitively to requests to attend funerals or associated events and have the discretion to authorise such absences. We will authorise short term absence for close family members i.e. parent, sibling (other family members such as grandparents would typically be 1 day).

Public performances, including film or TV work - The Local Authority must licence a student to take part in a public performance. The school will only authorise absence where participation has been agreed and a licence obtained.

Examination – children entered for examinations during normal school hours will not have this time authorised. It is expected that examination boards will arrange such examinations outside school hours.

Unauthorised Absence

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

- parents keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy
- absences which have never been properly explained or prior authorisation not requested
- children who arrive at school too late after registration (after registration has closed)
- Shopping, looking after other children,
- Birthdays

Where unauthorised absence is deemed to be a concern for a particular child the school will:

- write to parents to alert them to concerns regarding their child’s attendance
- request support from the Education Welfare Service

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

The Department for Education states that a pupil becomes a ‘persistent absentee’ when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year **for whatever reason**. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to a child’s education and we need parent’s fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absences and the reasons given for them are recorded thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached PA level, or is at risk of moving towards that mark, is given priority and we will seek to act immediately.

5.2 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.

Penalty Notices

There are 2 reasons a Penalty Notice might be used:

- Where a pupil has 6 or more unauthorised absences.
- Where a pupil is stopped with parents/carers during a truancy sweep and the absence is not authorised by the school.

How this Works in practice:

A school will refer a family to Suffolk County Council if a child has six or more unauthorised absences. Each half day is one absence. These do not have to be consecutive, each unauthorised absence is counted and once they **total 7**, the penalty referral is made, i.e. the **7th** absence will trigger the penalty referral.

Parents and carers will be issued with a penalty notice as a result of the referral being made. The penalty issued is charged at £60 per parent, per child. A parent is classed as any person who normally cares for the child. For example, if a family has 3 children and 2 parents, this will result in a fine of £360.

The money from a fine is paid to the Department for Education, once Suffolk has taken out the cost of issuing it. **The money does not go to the school.**

Unauthorised absences stay on a child's school record.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may consider:

- The 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 or withdraw the notice.

Please note:

- If fines are not paid within the stipulated time, they are doubled
- If fines are still not paid, then it is most likely that Suffolk County Council will take the parents to court to seek action be taken. Ultimately, a custodial sentence can be given.

- If unauthorised absence continues after a fine has been paid, again, Suffolk County Council will most likely take the parents to court to seek action to be taken. Ultimately, a custodial sentence can be given.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

School's roles and responsibilities

All staff at Wood Ley School have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which our pupils 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 by their own attendance and punctuality.

Attendance Leader

The Headteacher, in her role as Attendance Leader, oversees, directs and co-ordinates the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and ensures the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. She ensures that up-to-date attendance data and any matters directly related to attendance are shared with the Senior Leadership Team, and to staff, pupils and parents as appropriate. It is her responsibility to see that a termly report is prepared for the governing body. She ensures 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 during the afternoon session. Classroom teachers are responsible for completing the attendance registers using the prescribed codes. (see Appendix A)

The register will be called promptly at 8.50 am and at the beginning of afternoon school.

Morning register and playground doors will close at 9:00 am. Any pupil who arrives after the closing of the register will be marked as U (see Appendix A) and will need to enter the school through the main reception.

For health and safety reasons it is important that the school knows who is in the building. Pupils arriving late should report to the school office. Parents/carers of pupils who arrive after the registers have closed will be asked to sign them in.

For the same reason it is important that pupils leaving the premises legitimately (eg for a medical appointment), or returning to school later in the day are also signed in or out by a responsible adult.

7. Attendance monitoring

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 as an unauthorised absence **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 are distinguishable.

If absence is frequent or continuous, parents will be asked to provide proof (such as a doctor's note or prescription) that the absence is unavoidable. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not necessarily mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence rests with the Headteacher, who will follow Local Authority (LA) and, Department of Education guidance and agreed local procedure.

If no explanation about an absence is received by the school **within 2 weeks**, the absence will remain unauthorised.

Collection and analysis of data

The Attendance Leader will ensure that attendance data is complete, accurate, analysed and reported to the senior leadership team, parents and the governing body. The report should include commentary on the school attendance target, as set by the LA. The data will inform the school's future practice to improve attendance.

Attendance is monitored regularly and half-termly reports sent to the Educational Welfare Officer when requested.

Accurate attendance returns are made to the DfE within the stipulated time frame.

Systems and strategies for managing and improving attendance

Parents are reminded in newsletters and school meetings about the importance of good attendance and its links to attainment. Current attendance data and progress towards the school target is published in all newsletters to parents/carers. Additionally, children are awarded termly 'Attendance Certificates' in recognition of 100% attendance.

First-day calling

Wood Ley School has in place a system of first-day calling. This means that parents will be telephoned on the first day a pupil is absent, without explanation, to establish a reason for the absence. This helps to identify at an early stage pupil who do not have a good reason for absence or who may be absent without their parents' knowledge. Where it is not possible to contact parents on the first or second (if applicable) day of absence, the school will send them a letter by first class post.

Meetings with parents

Where there is an emerging pattern to a pupil's absence, with or without explanation, the school will invite parents to a meeting to discuss the reasons for the absences. Plans will be put in place with the parents and pupil to resolve any difficulties and improve the attendance within a specified time

limit – usually no more than 6 weeks. It will be explained to parents that any future absences will be unauthorised unless there is clear evidence of a good reason for them.

Referral to the Education Welfare Officer

If there continues to be unauthorised absences by the end of the specific time the matter will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer.

Post-registration truancy

Post-registration truancy occurs when a pupil goes missing from school having previously registered for the session. This behaviour not only means the pupil will not be receiving a full-time education, it also potentially renders him/her vulnerable to harm. If a pupil appears to have left the premises without authorisation, the school will try to contact his/her parents immediately.

Parents' / carers' responsibilities

The prime responsibility for ensuring children receive an appropriate and full-time education rests with parents / 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 Wood Ley School.

Wood Ley School expects parents / carers:

- ensure their children attend the school regularly;
- support their children's attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum;
- **not** expect the school to automatically agree any requests for absence, and **not** condone unjustified absence from school;
- notify school on the first day of a child's absence;
- ensure their child(ren) arrive at school on time, properly dressed and with the right equipment for the day;
- contact the school without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their children's school lives. Wood Ley School will endeavour to support parents to address their concerns.

Pupils' responsibilities

All pupils 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.

Governors' responsibilities

The governing body of a maintained school 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 children who are pupils at the school.

7.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at local authority level through the school absence returns. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

7.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers, and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

8. Monitoring arrangements

Reviewing the policy

This attendance policy will be reviewed annually at the governor's curriculum and standards committee and presented to Governing Body for approval.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

Equality and Diversity, and Special Educational Needs (SEN)

All pupils and parents regardless of ethnic origin, gender, class, aptitude or ability will be treated equally.

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late after register has closed but within 10 minutes of register closing eg 9:10
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be

		absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day