

# **Woodcote Primary School Attendance Policy**



**Date adopted: Autumn 2024**

**Date to be reviewed: Autumn 2025**

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## **Introduction:**

For children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend school regularly. Your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

## **The Importance of Regular Attendance:**

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may also affect the learning of others in the same class. Children are best safeguarded from exploitation and other risks in the wider community by attending school regularly where they are supervised by qualified and caring professionals.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

This policy works to meet the mandatory requirements laid out in [Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

## **Promoting Regular Attendance:**

It is the responsibility of parents, pupils and school staff to ensure regular attendance and, in order to achieve this, we will incorporate an attendance summary in every child's annual report.

Throughout the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

We analyse all absence carefully and draw trends based on pupils' characteristics, vulnerabilities, days of the week, subjects missed and repeat illnesses. We focus our attention on addressing these trends of absence.

## **Understanding types of absence:**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school, as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause. If this occurs, school will require evidence of the appointment to be able to authorise the absence.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority (County Attendance Team) using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained

- Children who arrive at school late after the register has closed and are therefore given an unauthorised absence mark
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed
- Excessive illness without medical evidence

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, never cover up their absence or give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

You can support your child by:

- Ensuring regular and early bedtimes
- Helping with homework
- Having uniform and equipment prepared the night before
- Providing a healthy breakfast
- Reporting any academic or social concerns promptly
- Retaining open & honest communication with school
- Being positive about school (even if your own experience was less than positive)

### **Exceptional Leave:**

**All schools in Oxfordshire adopt a policy of not authorising requests for holidays.**

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time. Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday and the school may request a Penalty Notice to be issued.

If a child is found to have been on holiday or a treat day when the register notes a different reason, the register will be amended with an unauthorised absence - holiday not agreed.

If exceptional leave is required please put this in writing to the Headteacher and your request will be considered on an individual basis taking account of the following:

- It is widely known that the link between a pupil's attendance and attainment is irrefutable.
- Early poor attendance habits follow through into secondary school, further education and employment.
- Exceptional leave will be unauthorised when a pupil's attendance is less than 96%.
- Exceptional leave will always be refused when school is aware of any truancy.
- Exceptional leave will be refused when requests are regular (annual) or when patterns become identifiable.
- Reasons for Exceptional Leave will be logged on the pupil's record and shared as part of the transfer/transition process to another school.

The Penalty is £80 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, increasing to £160 if paid between day 21 and day 28. This amount is prescribed by the Education Penalty Notices (England) Regulations 2007. Failure to pay a Penalty Notice within the prescribed period may result in prosecution for the underlying offence of failure to secure regular school attendance.

Any second penalty notice issued to the same parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period will be charged at a higher rate of £160 with no option for this second offence to be discharged at the lower rate of £80. (The three-year period begins from the date of the first penalty notice issued on or after 19 August 2024)

**Please note: Penalty Notices are issued per parent/per child.**

### **Absence Procedures:**

#### **If your child is absent you must:**

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence with the reason for the non-attendance.
- Be honest about the reason for absence, including if you are on holiday

#### **If your child is absent we will:**

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you.
- Visit you at home if we have not heard from you by day 3 of absence.
- Follow School Attendance processes including inviting the parent/carer to a meeting in the school to identify the barriers to attendance and ensure support is put in place, this could include a Strengths and Needs form.
- If your child's attendance fails to improve (moves below 90%), we will refer the matter to the County Attendance Team.

### **Lateness:**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. Children who miss the start of the day miss work and also time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, it can be embarrassing for the child and can also actually encourage absence.

### **How we manage time keeping:**

The school day starts at **8.45a.m.** and we expect your child to be in class at that time. If your child arrives to school and registration as expected, they will receive a present mark (**I**)

Registers are marked by **8.55a.m.** and your child will receive a late mark (**L**) if they are not in by that time.

At **9.15a.m.** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark (**U**) that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

Whilst there is no mandatory time for **pm** registration, the school will seek to take the register

directly following the lunchtime period at **1.00pm** in order to support safeguarding and early identification of pupils who are Late to return or do not return. If your child is present for this registration they will be marked (A)

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with a member of the School Leadership Team to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

### **Persistent Absenteeism (PA):**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason. Absence at this level may cause considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we would appreciate parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Parents will be contacted if concerns arise around attendance.

All PA cases are also automatically reported to the County Attendance team. If your child becomes a PA pupil, we will seek your consent to complete a Strengths and Needs form with you and consider convening a Team Around the Family.

### **Severe Absenteeism (SA):**

A pupil becomes a 'severe absentee' when they miss 50% or more schooling across the school year for any reason. Absence at this level is doing significant damage to any child's academic and social progress and can have lifelong consequences.

All SA pupils at our school will have an Individual Attendance Plan which will incorporate multi-agency input. You will be expected to engage with all partners to improve your child's attendance to 96+%.

### **The County Attendance Team:**

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the County Attendance Team at Oxfordshire County Council for consideration of legal proceedings.

At the school's request, the County Attendance Team may issue a Penalty Notice per parent/carer, or take action via a Non-Attendance referral, the legislation is the Education Act 1996 sec. 444(1) and 444(1A). *"If any child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence."*

The County Attendance Team, with the school, will encourage you to engage with a Strengths and Needs form. Education Supervision Orders may be discussed with you to support rapidly improved attendance.

Parents that have previously been issued with Penalty Notices whose child has further unauthorised absences may receive summonses to Court.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the County Attendance Team themselves

to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is 01865 323513 [attendance@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:attendance@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

### **School Targets, Projects and Special Initiatives:**

As with all schools, this school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is 96%, and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level.

Our target is to achieve higher than 96% attendance; good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be among the best in Oxfordshire.

Throughout the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements can be made.

### **Contact details:**

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your current contact numbers and email addresses at all times. Help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up-to-date number and email address – if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on contact details throughout the year. Please ensure we have both parents, where applicable and at least a third emergency contact person's contact details.

### **Those people responsible for attendance in this school are:**

Mrs E. Hunt, Headteacher  
Mrs M. Wornham, Deputy Headteacher  
Mrs H Harvey, Safeguarding Governor and Chair of Governors

### **Summary:**

The school has a legal duty to report and publish its absence figures and its attendance policy to parents and to promote attendance. School attendance data must be available to Oxfordshire County Council and the Department for Education. Our school is obliged to share all attendance data daily with both departments.

Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend regularly and on time.

We have a lead Governor who scrutinises our attendance arrangements on behalf of all our pupils.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible for each pupil. Regular attendance supports optimising your child's attainment, mental health and social well-being.