

Attendance Policy

Summary

Woodham Academy has an overriding concern for the well-being of its students. All aspects of Woodham's Attendance policy are in accordance with our responsibilities under equality, diversity and disability discrimination legislation.

We seek to ensure that all students of Woodham Academy receive an education which maximises opportunities for each young person to realise his/her true potential. The school will strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the school community is able to thrive.

We believe that all students benefit from the education we provide, and therefore from regular attendance. The aim of our attendance policy is to provide a consistent practice that encourages and facilitates the regular attendance of all pupils.

All school staff will work with pupils and their families to provide support in helping them to meet their legal duty; to ensure that their children attend school regularly and on time.

This policy has been written in line with the DFE 'School attendance Departmental advice for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities' (October 2014) and 'School attendance parental responsibility measures' (January 2015). This Attendance policy outlines the procedures which will be utilised to support excellent attendance at school.

This policy is supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and inclusive learning.

Date adopted	January 2017
Review date	Annually
Last Reviewed	January 2018

1. Principles

Woodham Academy recognises the importance of excellent attendance for students to achieve their maximum potential. Our firm belief is that most students will have at least good attendance (see table page ----for definitions). However, we recognise that some students and their parents will struggle to ensure they attend regularly. This policy aims to outline the appropriate support for both students and their parents to remove any barriers that have led to poor attendance. However, we also recognise that there are occasions where we must utilise the support of the Local Authority in taking legal action to ensure that a student's attendance improves.

We are committed to the following principles:

- Woodham's first and over-riding concern is for the development and well-being of its students.
- We wish Woodham Academy, as a community, to be based upon the principles of achievement for all, tolerance, respect and good citizenship.
- A positive and encouraging ethos is central to the engagement of students and their good attendance.
- Creating a safe and orderly environment where all students feel safe and able to learn.
- All students have an equal right, and access to, an education in accordance with the national curriculum, or agreed alternative.
- Students will not be deprived of their education opportunities by their own absence.
- Action being taken where necessary to secure an improvement in attendance.

2. Aims

This policy aims to:

- Clarify the expectations of each of the stakeholders of the school.
- Clarify the school's approach to processes to ensure excellent attendance.
- Give guidance to parents on what actions the school will take to support young people in ensuring they have excellent attendance.

3. Roles and Responsibilities:

As part of the Academy's approach to maintaining excellent attendance, the Governing Body will:

- Ensure that the importance of attendance is made clear by promoting the relevant Academy policies and guidance directed to parents and staff.
- Annually review the Academy's attendance policy and ensure that all provisions are in place to allow school staff, parents, and students to implement the policy effectively.
- Ensure that the school is implementing effective means of recording attendance and organising that data, including for children who are educated off site.

4. Director of Student Support in conjunction with Heads of Learning:

As part of the Academy's approach to maintaining high attendance, the Director of Student Support in conjunction with Heads of Learning will:

- Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance with students and their parents.
- Ensure the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that students are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement.
- Coordinate with the governing body to monitor the implementation of the policy and its effectiveness, with annual review of full policy.
- Ensure that staff are up to date with the school's attendance policy and that staff are fully trained to recognise and deal with attendance issues.
- Ensure government legislation on attendance is complied with and that the leadership team are up to date with any legislation changes and how to implement them.
- Report attendance to the governors in each report given by the Headteacher.
- Ensure that systems to record and report attendance data are in place and working effectively.

5. Teachers and support staff:

As part of the Academy's approach to maintaining high attendance, the teachers and support staff will:

- Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance with students and their parents.
- Ensure the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that students are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement.
- Ensure the senior manager responsible for overseeing attendance and any other relevant personnel are kept fully aware of and up to date with any concerns relating to students that may impact on their attendance.
- Ensure compliance with regulation and guidance on attendance.
- Work professionally with parents, carers, students and relevant agencies to secure improvements in attendance via appropriate support or enforcement measures.
- Ensure understanding and follow the correct systems for recording attendance and that attendance is taken each lesson and session.

6. Parents / Carers:

As part of the Academy approach to maintaining high attendance, we expect that parents / carers will:

- Engage with their children's education – support their learning and take an interest in what they have been doing at school.
- Promote the value of good education and the importance of regular school attendance at home.
- Follow the procedures outlined in this policy regarding absences, ill health, medical or dental appointments, leave of absence in term time and punctuality.
- Do everything they can to prevent unnecessary school absences.
- Keep the school informed of any circumstances which may affect their child's attendance and work with staff in resolving any issues that may be having an impact on their child.
- Enforce a regular routine at home in terms of homework, bedtime etc. so that the child is used to consistency and the school becomes part of that routine.
- Recognise it is vital that the child receives the same messages at home as they do at school about the importance of attendance.

7. The Law

- Parents / carers need to make sure their child attends school regularly and on time. As parents are responsible for this duty in law, they will be breaking the law if they do not do this and there is no good reason for missing school.
- The Academy and Local Authority **want to help parents if there is a problem**. If attendance does not improve or parents do not accept help and support offered, the Local Authority may issue parents with a warning notice, Penalty Notice or ask them to attend an interview to be asked questions about whether they have broken the law.
- If parents go to court and are found guilty of an offence, they could be fined up to £1,000 for a less serious offence or up to £2,500 if the law breaking is more serious. **In very serious cases, the court may involve the probation service or consider up to 3 months in prison.**

8. Attendance Procedures

a) On the first day of absence and any further absence

- If a child is ill or is absent for any reason, parents or carers are asked to phone the main office giving a reason for the absence. It is the expectation for parents to inform the school on each day of absence.
- If a child is absent from school and there is no phone call from home then school will phone home to inform parents that the child is not in school and enquire about the reason why. It is the expectation for parents to inform the school on each day of absence.
- Doctors and dentist appointments should be made outside of school time. If this is not possible, a student should miss the minimum amount of school time necessary. It is an expectation that a student should be at school both before the appointment and return to school following. Any student who is absent will be issued with a 'Catch Up Card' on their return. The expectation is that the student will complete all work missed within a period of one week. Support will be provided, where necessary, to achieve this.

b) Periods of extended absence

- If a child's absence continues beyond 3 days then parents are requested to notify the school to update them. If a phone call is not received then the school will contact home to verify the absence. Heads of Learning will intervene to discuss this with parents/carers. The Educational Welfare Officer is also likely to be used to make a home visit.
- If the school receives no reason for absence then an unauthorised absence will be recorded. Continued absenteeism and unauthorised absences could result in further action such as referral to the Attendance Improvement Team to consider enforcement action and possibly a fixed penalty notice (this includes unauthorised absences accrued through leave of absence taken during term time).
- At regular intervals the attendance staff and Heads of Learning will use its attendance systems to analyse absence across the school. As a result some families will receive letters to inform them if their child's absence is below the expected levels of attendance (unless this is due to frequent hospital appointments and/or long term medical needs).

c) Help & Support:

- If help is needed with attendance, it is important that a parent or carer talk to the Academy about the issues as soon as possible. They may be requested to attend a meeting in school to talk about the problems and to put a plan in place to help, including targets for improvements to be made. *Please see appendix 3.* Sometimes, school may need to involve other services to help.

d) Communication:

- The school will always try to communicate with parents / carers regarding their child's attendance if it declines. This communication may involve explaining that attendance is a cause for concern by letter, making telephone calls, texts and inviting parents / carers to attend a meeting in school, depending on the circumstances. The school will work with parents and carers to discuss ways that support can be offered to improve the situation.

e) Enforcement Action:

- If, following the Academy's attempts to intervene there is no significant improvement and no good reasons for absences (i.e. absences are not supported by relevant evidence), or parents/carers have not co-operated with the school's attempts to improve the situation the Academy will consider referring the matter to the Local Authority for enforcement action.
- The High Court has confirmed that the school's Head Teacher authorises absences. If a child misses school for a significant period because of illness, or if the Academy does not know of any serious health issue that would mean

a child could miss school, the Academy may ask parents /carers to provide medical evidence to authorise absences.

As an Academy we are committed to supporting each student effectively, to ensure that they receive the very best education possible and therefore have the best life chances. All challenges made concerning persistent absences, will be handled sensitively and in confidence.

f) Punctuality

- Registration time is at 08.55am and 13.20pm. It is important for all students to be on time as missing the first few minutes of any lesson can be disruptive and unsettling, both for the individual and for the rest of the class. If a student arrives in school up to 50 minutes after registration then a late mark will be recorded in the register (L). Registers will be closed at this point and any arrivals after this time will be recorded with a (U) code. This is the same as an unauthorised absence and may contribute to a referral to Durham County Council's Attendance Improvement Team to consider enforcement action (this requires a minimum of 10 sessions of unauthorised absence codes in a 12 week school period). Enforcement could be in the form of a warning, fixed penalty notice or prosecution. If there is persistent lateness parents/ carers will be informed by letter. For students that are persistently late to school, parent / carers will be informed and targets set.
- All students who are late with no valid reason will receive a C2a, which incurs an after school detention.

g) Leave of Absence in Term Time

- Head teachers are no longer able to grant leave of absence during term time **unless there are exceptional circumstances**. The Academy will consider each request of absence individually. This will take into account the circumstances, such as the nature of the event for which leave is sought, the student's prior attendance and any important events taking place in school at that time e.g. examinations and assessments.
- An application for leave of absence must be made well in advance via a form which is available from the school website or in person from the school office. *Please see appendix 7*. Where a leave of absence is granted, the Head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion. As stated in the most recent DFE guidance on attendance, if an application for leave of absence is not made prior to the time of the required absence then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised regardless of circumstances.

Please note that absence will not be authorised under any circumstances during any period of public examinations or internal assessments.

9. Children Missing from Education:

- If a student moves from the area and their whereabouts are unknown, the Academy can legally remove a child from the roll after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. It is vital that parents / carers keep the Academy informed of any change of details/circumstances and regularly update any change in information. A child may be at risk of losing their school place if their whereabouts are not known.
- It is also important that emergency contact information is kept up to date and that if parents / carers are leaving the area, details are provided of where and how they can be contacted. If parents / carers do not do this and the school is unable to trace a child, this would be treated as a safeguarding matter.

ATTENDANCE

97% – 100%	Excellent
95% – 96.9%	Good
93% - 94.9%	Below average
90% – 92%	Requires improvement
<90%	Unsatisfactory – considered as a persistent absentee by government guidelines

PLEASE BE ADVISED THAT SCHOOL EXPECTATIONS FOR ATTENDANCE WILL BE 95% AND ABOVE AND WILL NOT LOOK FAVOURABLY ON STUDENTS WITH POOR ATTENDANCE AND LATENESS

