Woodley Church of England Primary School

Our Vision:

At Woodley C of E Primary School, each person is unique and accepted as a child of God. Through strong Christian values, and our BRIGHT attitudes to learning we inspire hearts and minds to create life-long learners, who have the skills, knowledge and understanding to shine brightly in the world.

Attendance Policy
(Including Children Missing in Education)

Responsibility of: Leadership and Management Committee
Type of Policy: School Policy
Reviewed: Bi-Annually
Date of Review: September 2022

Version	DATE	DESCRIPTION
1	April 2022	Added regarding signed parental permission for Year 6 children to walk home alone.
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Chair of Governors:

Head Teacher:

Commitment to Attendance
The staff of Woodley CE Primary School are committed, in partnership with the parents/carers, pupils, governors and the Local Authority, to provide an education of the highest standard for all our children.

Regular attendance is essential to achieving this. Research clearly demonstrates the link between regular attendance and educational progress and attainment. As a school, we encourage parents to ensure their children achieve the maximum possible attendance and any issues that may prevent this are brought to the attention of school staff promptly. Clear expectations of daily attendance and routines that support children to achieve this, at an early age, will help pupils throughout their school life.

Expectations
We expect all pupils to:

- Attend school every day unless they are prevented from doing so by unavoidable reason or they have been granted Leave of Absence.
- Arrive at school on time.
- Attend appropriately prepared for the day.
- Talk to their parent/carer, class teacher or an appropriate member of staff if they are worried about anything that may affect their school attendance.

Definition of a Parent:
Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 defines 'parent' as:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child (having care of a child means that a person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child) is considered to be a parent in education law

We expect all parents/carers to:

- Encourage daily school attendance throughout the academic year and be aware of their legal responsibilities.
- Ensure their child arrives at school punctually and prepared for the school day.
- Advise school by 9.30am, on the first and any subsequent days, if their child is going to be absent, giving the reason for absence.
- Arrange non-urgent medical and dental appointments outside school hours or during the school holidays.
- Avoid taking their child out of school during term-time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**, in which case Leave of Absence must be requested in advance.
- Contact school promptly should a problem occur that may prevent their child from attending school.
- Notify the school of any changes in home circumstances that might affect their child.
- Notify school immediately of any changes to phone numbers, home address or emergency contact details.

School staff will:

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere
- Provide a safe learning environment
- Provide a sympathetic response to any pupil's or parent's/carer's concerns
- Keep regular and accurate records of AM and PM attendance and punctuality, monitor individual pupils' attendance and punctuality
- Contact parents/carers when a pupil fails to attend and where no message has been received by 10am, to explain the absence
- Follow up all unexplained absences to obtain explanations from parents. Although parents may offer a reason, only the school can authorise the absence. In the case of long term or frequent absence due to medical conditions, verifications from a GP or other relevant body may be requested
- Regularly inform parents/carers of the percentage % attendance of all pupils (parent's evenings, end of year reports etc.)
- Make initial enquiries regarding pupils who are not attending regularly by writing to parents. Letters will be issued in the following order:
  Letter 1 – Inform parents of current attendance % and offer an opportunity to meet with school to discuss any concerns, if parents feel it is needed.
  Letter 2 – Inform parents of current attendance % and request parent meet with school to discuss concerns.
- Refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to the Education Welfare Service. Failure by the family to comply with the planned support set by Education Welfare may result in further actions, e.g. a Penalty Notice, parental prosecution or an application for an Education Supervision Order
- Notify the Education Welfare Service after 10 days unexplained absence and after 15 days of consecutive sickness absence.

Pupils Leaving During the School Day

- Pupils are not allowed to leave the premises without prior permission from the school.
- When a pupil is being collected from school during the school day, parents/carers are requested to report to the school office before the pupil is allowed to leave the site.
- Parents/carers should arrange medical and other appointments outside of school time. Parents/carers are requested to confirm in writing the reason for any planned absence, the time of leaving and the expected return time.
- Pupils must be signed out at reception on leaving the school and signed back in on their return.
- If a pupil leaves the school site without permission their parents/carers will be contacted. Should the school be unable to contact the family it may be appropriate, in certain circumstances, to contact the Police and register the pupil as a missing person or contact Social Services.
- No pupil will be allowed to walk home alone during the school day unless it is an exceptional circumstance and only then with the Head teacher's authorisation if the child is in Year 6.

Pupils Leaving at the end of the Day

- When children enter Year 6 it is recognised that parents/carers may wish to start to develop a child's independence by allowing them to walk to and from school without an adult. Signed parental permission must be received before any Year 6 child will be allowed to walk home alone. This agreement is made on the understanding that the child will be going straight home from school.
- If another adult is collecting your child, other than the authorised adults known to school, then parents must contact the school office and inform school who will be collecting the child. If no contact is made then the school office will phone to get authorisation before releasing the child.

Punctuality/Lateness

It is crucial that children arrive at school on time for registration at the beginning of the day. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other pupils in the class. It is paramount therefore that all pupils arrive at school on time. For school pupils and parents/carers the grounds are open at 8.30am and the school building opens at 8.40am.

- Registration takes place at 8.50am and pupils who arrive after 8.50am will be recorded as late to school
- Registers close at 9.20am and after this lateness is recorded as an unauthorised absence (This could lead to prosecution by the local authority if the problem persists)
- Persistent lateness by a pupil will initially be followed up by school staff and if not resolved will be referred to the Education Welfare Service.

Changing Schools

It is important that if parents/carers decide to send their child to a different school, they must inform the school in writing as soon as possible. A pupil will not be removed from the school roll until the following information has been received and investigated:

- The date the pupil will be leaving the school and starting the next
- The address of the new school
- A new home address

The pupil's school records will then be sent to the new school and notification sent to the Local Authority. In the event that the school has not been informed of the above information, the family will be referred to Education Welfare Service following 'reasonable efforts' to contact the family and after four weeks the pupil will be registered on the S2S website as a pupil missing education.

Elective Home Education

Parents/carers have a duty to ensure that their children receive a suitable full time education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. The law allows parents/carers to choose to educate children at home instead of sending them to school. This is known as Elective Home Education (EHE).

Should parents/carers wish to follow this route they are required to put this in writing to the Head Teacher requesting that their child is removed from the school roll.

School will then inform the EHE Officer who will make contact with the family and ensure that education is 'suitable and efficient'.

Leave of Absence

- The school holiday dates, INSET days and SATs dates are published with sufficient notice
- Only in "exceptional" circumstances will leave of absence in term time be authorised. This is as per current Department for Education guidance.
- If leave is taken without prior authorisation by the school, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and the Education Welfare Service may be notified.

Penalty Notices for Holidays

- The Head teacher can now request that the local authority issue a Penalty Notice to parents, when pupils are taken out of school for five or more days' unauthorised holiday. Penalty Notices are issued per parent, per pupil
- The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notices is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days
- If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days the local authority is then obliged to prosecute for the original offence of non-school attendance.

Penalty Notices

In addition to Penalty Notices issued for unauthorised leave, Penalty Notices may also be issued if a parent/carer fails to ensure regular school attendance.

The Penalty Notice Code of Conduct covers the following unauthorised absences:

- The deliberate taking of a holiday in term time without/against school permission (where it can be clearly demonstrated that the parents/carers understood that permission had not/would not be given) and where this has created unauthorised absence of at least 10 sessions (5 days or more) whether consecutively or not, in a ten school week period, will result in the issuing of a penalty notice.
- Overt truancy (including pupils caught on truancy sweeps)
- Parentally-condoned absences
- Unauthorised holidays in term-time of 5 days or more
- Excessive delayed return from authorised extended holidays without prior school agreement – i.e. 2 days
- Persistent late arrival at school (after the register has closed) i.e. 10 occasions in a 10 week school week period.
- Less than 80% attendance, the absences being unauthorised; during a 4 school week period.
- A pupil having been excluded from a Wokingham school, being found present in a public place, during school hours, without reasonable justification.

Failure to ensure regular school attendance

If concerns regarding attendance arise, the class teacher will make the initial contact with the parent/carer to resolve any issues that may be preventing irregular school attendance. Should no improvement be seen or the concerns remain, the matter will

be escalated to senior staff in the school. Where all attempts to improve attendance have been exhausted, the school will refer to the Education Welfare Service.

Section 444 of the Education Act, 1996, says:

"If a 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".

If the reasons given for your child's irregular school attendance are not satisfactory, then the Local Authority may take legal proceedings against you for failure to comply with the Law. This may result in:

- A Fixed Penalty Notice payable up to **£120** fine
- Prosecution under Section 444 (1) Education Act 1996, where if convicted you may be fined up to **£1,000**.
- Prosecution under Section 444 (1a) Education Act 1996 where if convicted you may be fined up to **£2,500 and/or sentenced to a term of imprisonment for up to 3 months.**