



## **Woodlea Primary School Policy for Attendance**

Reviewed by	LGC & HT
Reviewed in	Nov 2021
Status & Review Cycle	2 year cycle
Next Review date	Nov 2023

## Introduction

At Woodlea Primary School, good attendance is considered a high priority. Parents are informed of school hours and school expectations in our prospectus, at their induction meeting and in our attendance information leaflet which is sent to all parents. Good attendance is rewarded. Poor attendance and lateness adversely affect both pupils and staff.

It is the parents' responsibility and their legal duty (Section 7 of the Education Act 1996) to ensure that their child receives full time education. We seek a partnership with parents to encourage good attendance and punctuality.

## Legal responsibilities

- Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child attends regularly and punctually.
- The LA has a legal duty to ensure that parents carry out this responsibility
- The school has a legal duty to record absence of registered pupils in compliance with the regulations
- The governing body has a legal duty to ensure the school register is kept in accordance with regulations and must set attendance targets which are then forwarded to the LA.

## Registers

The register is a legal document and is confidential. It may be requested in a court of law as evidence in a prosecution for non-attendance. The registers are completed twice daily using the SIMS Attendance module, at the start of morning school and immediately after lunch break. A hard copy of the registers is printed every day.

The register should be completed by 9.00am (closed at 9.30am) each morning and by 1.20pm in the afternoon and sent immediately to the office.

## Lateness

Children who arrive late must report to the office and parents/carers must complete the signing in/out book.

Children who arrive after 9.30am in the morning without good reason are recorded as an unauthorised absence.

To minimise disruption at the beginning of the day, when children are late, parents must leave their children at the office; they must not accompany them to the classroom.

Persistent lateness will result in a letter from the Head Teacher and parents/carers may be invited to a meeting.

A class teacher who has any particular concerns about attendance or punctuality should refer the child to the Head Teacher. The Inclusion Service (formally Education Welfare) monitors registers on a termly basis.

## Absence from school

Parents are asked to inform the school of all absence on **each day** of absence by personal contact, letter, email or telephone. Notification of the nature of the illness and the expected length of absence is also expected. A record of absence messages are kept on the child's personal file.

For medical or other appointments during the school day notification is required **in advance**, where possible these should be arranged out of school hours. Appointment cards must be shown to the school.

The office staff will make contact with the parent/carer of any child who is not in school for whom we have not received an absence message for by 9.30am. If no reason is received for the absence this is recorded as unauthorised.

For persistent unauthorised absence, a telephone call is made to the parent/carer on every day of each non-attendance. If an explanation for absence is unsatisfactory parents will be contacted to discuss any difficulties with school attendance.

If a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern a letter is sent home highlighting this to parents. If attendance continues to fall then a meeting with the Head Teacher may be arranged.

If a pupil's attendance continues to be a concern parents may be notified that any further absences for illness will be unauthorised without medical evidence. The school will work with Surrey Inclusion Service to support families.

#### Requests for Leave of Absence during term time

Parents/carers are strongly discouraged from taking their children out of school during term time.

No holidays during term time will be authorised. The Head Teacher may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The Head Teacher is required to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted. Exceptional circumstances will be decided by the Chair of Governors and the Head Teacher and reported to the governors at their next full meeting.

Parents wishing to apply for leave of absence for exceptional circumstances must complete an application form and submit it to the Head Teacher. The forms are available from the school office. (See Appendix 1)

#### Failure to ensure regular school attendance

The Local Authority retains control of the Inclusion Service (formally Education Welfare Service), and every effort is made to maintain close links with the Inclusion Officer attached to the school. Where school interventions have failed to secure regular attendance, an official referral may be made to the Inclusion Service.

#### Penalty Notices

The Inclusion Service, acting on behalf of Surrey County Council may issue a Penalty Notice as an alternative to the prosecution of a parent/carer for their child's unauthorised absence from school and requires the recipient to pay a fixed amount.

The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice 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 must consider prosecuting the parent/carer for failing to ensure regular school attendance under Section 444 Education Act 1996.

### Circumstances when a Penalty Notices may be issued

**The Education (Pupil Registration)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2013, state that Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Head teacher is required to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.**

Where a child is taken out of school for 10 sessions (a session is a morning or afternoon) or more and the 'leave of absence' is without the authority of the head teacher, **each parent** is liable to receive a penalty notice for **each child** who is absent. In these circumstances, a warning will not be given where it can be shown that parents had previously been warned that such absences would not be authorised and that they will be liable to receive a Penalty Notice if the leave of absence is taken.

The issue of a Penalty Notice will also be considered where a pupil has incurred 7 or more unauthorised sessions during the preceding 6 school weeks. The parents' failure to engage with supportive measures proposed by the school or Education Welfare will be a factor when considering the issue of a Penalty Notice. Unauthorised absence will include late arrival after the close of registration without good reason.

**With the exception of unauthorised leave of absence taken in term time, parents will be sent a formal warning of their liability to receive such a notice before it is issued.**

### Why has it been introduced?

Reducing absence from school is a key priority nationally and locally because missing school damages a pupil's attainment levels, disrupts school routines and the learning of others and can leave a pupil vulnerable to anti-social behaviour and youth crime. Above all, missing school seriously affects children's longer term life opportunities.

### What is a Penalty Notice?

Under existing legislation, each parent/carers commits an offence if a child fails to attend school regularly and the absences are classed as 'unauthorised' (those absences for which the school has not given permission). Depending on circumstances such cases may result in prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

A Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution, which does not require an appearance in Court but is used as a means of enforcing a pupil's attendance where there is a reasonable expectation that their use will secure an improvement.

If the Penalty Notice is paid in full and on time, then you will not be prosecuted for this particular offence. The Local Authority does not take the decision to issue a Penalty Notice lightly and would prefer to work with parents/carers to improve attendance without having to resort to any enforcement actions.

Poor school attendance can affect a child's future employment and life opportunities, and the Local Authority will use the powers if this is the only way of securing school attendance. Each parent is liable to receive a Penalty Notice for each child who is failing to attend school regularly.