



PUPIL ATTENDANCE POLICY

The Woodlands Community Primary School

Aims

To promote excellent attendance

Information for Parents

All children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

All children are sometimes reluctant to attend school and any problems that arise with attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent.

A school's attendance policy must include procedural referral agreements that are designed to promote and safeguard the welfare of pupils. Schools have a duty in law to refer any absence of 10 days or more where they have been unable to make contact with the parent/child or have general concerns about the absence to the Education Welfare Service.

Schools are required to take an attendance register twice a day, and this shows whether the pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent. If a pupil of compulsory school age is absent every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school, as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. Only school can authorise the absence, not parents. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness or other unavoidable cause. Absence from part of the school day also needs authorisation.

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

- parents keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences when parents do not contact school with an explanation
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark

Parents whose children are experiencing difficulties should contact the school at an early stage and work

together with the staff in resolving any problems. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school or the parent may refer the child to the Education Welfare Worker from the County Council. He/she will also try to resolve the situation with voluntary support, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, these Workers can issue Penalty Notices or use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment. Please see Appendix 3 explaining new regulations that came into force 1st January 2018.

- A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence.
- Use of a Penalty Notice or formal warning of a Penalty Notice for unauthorised absence will be restricted to one notice/warning per parent per pupil per academic year (continued poor attendance in the same academic year can be addressed by other statutory actions available to the Local Authority under the Education Act 1996).
- The Penalty Notice fine would be £60 per parent per child (generally the DfE states that parents include all those with day to day responsibility of the child). This fine will increase to £120 if not paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the £120 fine within the period 22 to 28 days may lead to Court Proceedings.
- In cases where there is more than one pupil in a family with unauthorised absences, Penalty Notices may be issued for more than one child.

Information about individual school targets, projects and special initiatives

In accordance with Ofsted guidelines the school has adopted the following attendance target of 97.5%.

A **truancy text** will be sent to parents on any day a registered pupil of compulsory school age is absent without explanation. By contacting the parent the school also ensure that the parent is aware their child is not in school enabling the parent where necessary to establish their child is safe. A reply to this text is expected immediately.

Whole school and team attendance percentages are announced weekly and team points are allocated, these figures are also displayed in the entrance hall.

Each child with full term attendance of 100% will gain automatic Golden Time [additional fun and playtime on a Friday afternoon] on the last day of that term. Each child that has 100% attendance for the full academic year will receive a special reward.

The people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| Parents | – Regular pupil attendance & punctuality – Ring school <u>before 9.15am everyday of their absence</u> |
| Pupils | – Regular attendance & punctuality |
| Headteacher | – Overall attendance |
| Assistant SENDCO/HSL | |
| Office Staff | – Administration of data. First day contact if necessary. |
| Class Teacher | – Whole class attendance & punctuality |
| Nominated Governor | – Overall attendance |

Procedures

Taking holidays during term time is strongly discouraged as it can be damaging to a child's education. If parents want to take a child out of school for any reason, other than medical appointments, in term time [including half days], parents must fill in a 'request for leave during term time' (Appendix 2) form and return it to the headteacher via the office at least two weeks prior to the absence. Schools may only authorise absence in exceptional circumstances, not family holidays, see 'Guidance Notes for Parents requesting leave in term time' (Appendix 1)

If a child needs to attend a planned medical appointment parents should contact the office and provide a copy of the appointment letter.

If a child is absent [not planned] then parents must telephone school office on 01827 429020 before **9.15am**, this should be followed by a letter explaining the absence when the child returns. If a child is absent, and a reason has not been given, at 9.30am a 'Truancy Call' will be made, prompting parents to contact school. A reply to this text is expected immediately. At 9.40 am the school will make personal contact with the parents of any children whose absence has not been explained.

Parents must phone the school before **9.15am** every subsequent morning of the child's absence. On the 3rd day of absence the HSL will make contact with parents to check on the welfare of the child and also arrange to send work home to reduce the impact of the absence on learning. If, in the rare circumstance, a child is absent for 5 days the class teacher will phone the parent to follow up any questions about the work sent home and arrange for further support if needed.

If a child arrives after the bell they must report to the school office. A child will be marked late if they are not in class ten minutes after the register (9.10am) has been called. If a child is not in class 30 minutes after registration (9.35am) they will be marked as 'U' (arrived after registration closed) and this will be classed as an unauthorised absence.

As a school we operate a traffic light system that clearly shows the level of pupil of attendance.

- 97% to 100% is **Green** = excellent attendance.
- 95% to 96% is **Yellow** = almost 2 weeks absence over school year.
- 90% to 94% is **Grey** = needs rapid improvement as this could lead to almost a month of absence over the school year.
- Below 90% is **Red** = this is unacceptable and could lead to a months plus absence over a school year.

At the end of each half term any pupil who falls into the Red or Grey zones will be sent a letter detailing their absent sessions and the consequences if attendance does not improve.

When an individual pupil's attendance level falls below 90% in any term without good reason, a referral to the LST may be made by the school. Following investigation, any unresolved issues could result in the parent receiving a Penalty Notice or ultimately a prosecution under the Education Act 1996 s.444.

It is not appropriate for the school to authorise absences for shopping, looking after other children, haircuts etc. Leave may be granted in an emergency (e.g. bereavement) or for medical appointments which must be in school time.

Staff protocols

Registers.

Registers are completed at the start of morning (by 9.10am) and afternoon sessions (by 1.25pm due to phonics sets). The total number of pupils and the names of those absent are recorded and dated on a white board near the door.[this is taken out when there is a fire drill to help ensure all children are accounted for]

The names of pupils requiring a school dinner are recorded on the Dinner form in the register and returned to the office.

Communications

The secretary reports telephone messages, these are written in the message book which is taken to each class (by a nominated year 6 pupil) at 10.00am and again at the start of the afternoon session.

Absence notes received in class should be signed [to demonstrate that they have been seen and read] by the class teacher and forwarded to the school office. These notes will be shown to the Headteacher (if applicable) and then filed in the pupil's folder.

Lateness:

All pupils who are late must come in via the main office and report to the secretary. Children must be marked late if they arrive in class 10 minutes after the register has been called.

Monitoring

Daily individual attendance is monitored by the office staff, who report any unauthorised or unexplained absences to the HSL. The Head teacher is informed of any actions taken or required.

Weekly attendance figures and patterns are reported to the Head teacher who uses this information for celebrating high attendance in assembly.

The office staff collate and report any dips in attendance monthly to the HSL and Head teacher. Patterns and subsequent actions are assigned and logged.

Each term the Head teacher reports the attendance figures and analysis to the governors. This report also shows the attendance of vulnerable groups and the impact of the term's actions.

Summary

The school has a legal duty to promote attendance and to publish its absence figures to parents. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. School staff are committed to working with parents to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Guidance Notes for Parents requesting Leave in Term Time

1. Parents who want the school to consider granting leave of absence in school term time should read these notes carefully, **complete the attached form and send it to the head teacher**. This form should be sent to the school in time for the request to be considered **well before** the desired period of absence. Parents are strongly advised not to finalise any booking arrangements before receiving the school's decision regarding their request. Head teachers cannot authorise any leave of absence unless the request is received before the period of absence begins.
2. The Department for Education makes it clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. Head teachers now also determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.
3. There is no automatic right to any leave in term time.
4. Staffordshire County Council understands the challenges that some parents face when booking holidays particularly during school holidays. However, we believe that, in order to ensure children receive the best education and prospects, that they should be in school during term time.
5. Each case will be considered individually and on its own merits. Parents need, therefore, to consider very carefully before making any request for leave of absence. In considering a request, the school will take account of: -
 - the **exceptional** circumstances stated that have given rise to the request
 - the stage of the child's education and progress and the effects of the requested absence on both elements
 - the overall attendance pattern of the child
 - frequency of similar requests
 - whether the parent made the request in advance
 - students/pupils on examination courses or due to take SATS will **not** normally be granted leave of absence.
6. Where parents have children in more than one school a separate request must be made to each school. The head teacher of each school will make their own decision based on the factors relating to the child at their school. However head teachers may choose to liaise with each other as part of their decision-making process.
7. Should the school decide to grant leave of absence, but the child **does not return to school at the time s/he was expected to** (i.e. following the expiry of the granted leave of absence period) and no information is available to the school to explain/justify the continuing absence this absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
8. Should the school decide **not to grant leave of absence** and parents still take their child out of school, the absence will be recorded as **unauthorised**, which may be subject to a Penalty Notice fine of £60 **per parent* per child**. This fine will increase to £120 if not paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the £120 fine within the period 22 to 28 days may lead to Court proceedings.
9. The Local Authority will continue to monitor all school absences during term time and support head teachers in challenging parents who ignore the law.

* Generally the DfE states that parents include all those with day to day responsibility for a child.



Request for leave during term time

APPENDIX 2

To: The head teacher of **THE WOODLANDS PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Date.....

I request consideration of a grant of leave of absence from school during term time for:

my child (full name)

for the period from (date) to (date)

The **exceptional** circumstances and reason for this request are: -

.....
.....
.....

I have (an)other child(ren) in (an)other school(s) as follows

Child(ren) (full name(s)) School(s) attended

.....

.....

(Signature of 1st parent/carer(s) Print Name.....

(Signature of 2nd parent/carer(s) Print Name.....

Please return completed form to the school office. The school will write to you and inform you of the decision on whether the request is authorised or not.

For Office Use Only

Current Attendance.....%

Last Year's Attendance.....%

Number of school sessions taken as leave during term time(this academic year)

Agreed/Not Agreed

Request for leave is agreed/is not agreed for the above student to take leave during term time between the above dates.

Rationale to decline request :

Signed Head teacher . Date

Notification of decision: Date letter sent to parent/carer.....

Families First

Staffordshire County Council
2 Staffordshire Place
Tipping Street
Stafford
ST16 2DH

Email: paul.senior@staffordshire.gov.uk

Please ask for: Paul Senior

Date: 21 September 2017

Dear Parent / Carer

Changes to Penalty Notices for Absence from School

Ensuring your child has access to a good education is very important to us.

A key part of this is for all children and young people to regularly attend school, as this gives each learner the best chance to achieve their full potential. In light of the recent Isle of Wight court case and the subsequent Supreme Court ruling on school absences, we wanted to clarify our position for parents where there may be the potential for any ambiguity and to also ensure we are fully compliant with legal requirements.

As a result, we have made a few changes to our previous guidance to schools, parents and carers regarding absence from school. The new guidance will come into force from **1 January 2018** and is detailed below:

Penalty Notice for leave of absence (holiday) in term time

From 1 January 2018 **any** period of unauthorised leave may result in you as a parent receiving a penalty notice fine. Your head teacher will continue to be the only person able to authorise leave in term time, but this will apply only in exceptional circumstances. Any unauthorised absence will be referred by your head teacher to the local authority.

Penalty Notice for persistent lateness

Previously a pupil had to achieve 20 unauthorised late marks before a penalty notice warning could be issued. **This has now changed to 10 marks**, and late marks do not have to be one after the other in order for the penalty notice to be issued. You are therefore encouraged where possible to ensure your child attends school on time. However, if your child is late you must inform the school of the reason(s) why, as they may be able to offer you some form of advice or support.

Period of time used to measure persistent absence and lateness

If your child has had 10 days unauthorised absence or is late 10 times over a twelve week period, you may receive a penalty warning notice and also potentially a fine.

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These changes have been agreed with local head teachers and have been implemented to help promote and support good attendance to school. Further details and a copy of the revised Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty Notices can be obtained from the council's website www.staffordshire.gov.uk/education.

The vast majority of children and young people in Staffordshire have an excellent record of school attendance, and we recognise the efforts of so many parents to ensure their children attend school regularly.

The Local Authority will continue to take appropriate action for absences during term time when we are notified by head teachers, both to support them in their role and to ensure local children can continue to achieve the best possible outcomes from attending local schools.

Yours faithfully



Paul Senior
Head of Education Vulnerable Learner Services 0-25

