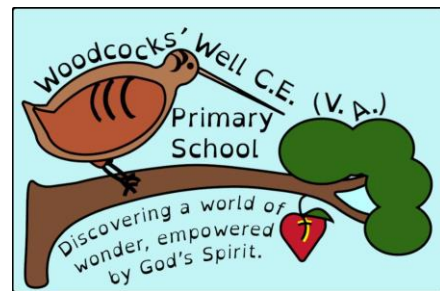


Attendance Policy

- Amendments to policy: February 2022
- Policy effective from: July 2019
- Review date: January 2025
- Learning and Wellbeing Committee



Introduction

Children are entitled to a full-time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have and we will endeavour to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures to support regular attendance. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children.

There is a relationship between attendance of pupils and their development, attainment and progress.

The school is committed to promoting good attendance as part of its dedication to ensure quality educational provision to give its pupils the best start in life and to “Discover a world of wonder empowered by God’s Spirit.”

The Education Act 1996 states that:

S.576: “Meaning of “parent”. In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires, “parent”, in relation to a child or young person, includes any person—

- (a) who is not a parent of his but who has parental responsibility for him, or
- (b) who has care of him.”

S.7: “Duty of parents to secure education of children of compulsory school age. The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable—

- (a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and
- (b) to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.”

S.444: “Offence: failure to secure regular attendance at school of registered pupil. If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his parent is guilty of an offence.”

The responsibility for giving strategic direction to attendance is led by the governing body. This will include monitoring, reporting, reviewing and planning for attendance, developing a policy, promoting an ethos of good attendance and setting any targets. The Chair of Governors,

Headteacher and senior leadership team will ensure that the governing body's objectives are met by the effective management of attendance and report to the full governing body in relation to this.

Managing attendance

The Headteacher will evaluate whole school data, identify surfacing trends, and attendance of defined groups, to enable planning of possible interventions; and considering individual cases of concern, to determine any appropriate interventions.

School staff are responsible to ensure they promote the Woodcocks' Well's ethos, set an example of attendance and punctuality, enable the school to keep accurate records of attendance for individual students.

Parents/Carers have responsibility to ensure their children attend school regularly and punctually.

Pupils have the responsibility to be on time for lessons and ready to learn.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to inform all members of our school communities of the following:

- How the school encourages and enables good attendance
- How the school monitors and reviews attendance
 - How the school monitors punctuality and lateness
- Authorised and unauthorised absences
- Leave of absence in term time
- Why attendance and punctuality matter

Encouraging and enabling good attendance

At Woodcocks' Well CE (VA) Primary School, we want all children to have a positive experience of school life and be able to reach their full potential. One way in which parents can help their child to do this is by ensuring they attend school every day. Parents can often feel that more time is spent at school than at home. Did you realise:

- There are 365 days in the year and 190 days in the school year.

- If we take, the days in school away from the days in the year we see that for 175 days children are at home with their parents.
- If a child takes leave of absence during term time, 10 school days, attendance starts to fall to only 180 days in school.
- If the child is then ill for five or more days in a year, they start to be at home more than they are in school.

Monitoring and reviewing 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 affect the learning of others in the same class. Children that have high levels of absence struggle with friendships, confidence and self-esteem. They also often feel that they have been left behind in aspects of learning, which often results in them not wanting to come to school.

Local Authority Monitoring of Attendance

There are a range of processes to support Local Authority monitoring of attendance:

- All schools have a statutory obligation to provide information about attendance to the LA and the DfE via the school census returns. This enables national comparisons.
- The development of Electronic Registration means that the Local Authority should be able to access attendance data centrally, and could therefore monitor trends.
- The Attendance and Children Out of School Team (ACOOS) monitors attendance on behalf of the Local Authority through meetings with school staff and register checks. This focuses particularly on children or young people with long-term absences, regular patterns of absence, the school's monitoring of student attendance at alternative provision such as college placements, return of children or young people after fixed term exclusions, admissions of children or young people for whom a place at the school has been agreed, children or young people cared for by the Local Authority.
- Monitoring of agreed School/ACOOS Action Plans to ensure priority concerns are effectively addressed. The Attendance Locality Officer and school must regularly review the Action Plans jointly.
- Monitoring the use and success of legal action to enforce attendance.
- The Admissions Team has a protocol for referral to the ACOOS team of children or young people who, for whatever reason, are without a school place.

Monitoring and reviewing lateness

School times:

- Children are welcome to come into school from 8.45am and must be in their classrooms ready for the register by 8:55am and not just coming through the school door.
- Registration closes at 9am.
- Lunchtime registration is at 1:00pm.
- School finishes at 3:15pm.

When a child arrives on time:

- Registration takes place quickly and smoothly
- A morning activity is completed or intervention task with an adult
- The day gets off to a good start for everyone
- Everyone hears the information given and is included in important explanations and discussions. This ensures that everyone knows what to do and what is expected of them

When a Child Arrives Late:

- It interrupts concentration
- It wastes valuable learning time
- The teacher repeats information / instructions whilst others have to wait
- The late child is at an immediate disadvantage because they may have missed important teaching points, missed discussions where ideas are shared and will be generally unsettled
- Children feel stressed and anxious about having to walk into their lessons late, some children find being late very distressing.

What happens if a child arrives late?

- If the child arrives after 8:55am they will have to enter school via the front entrance as playground gates are locked by 9:00am.
- On arrival at school they must be accompanied to the school office by a parent / guardian and signed in by the parent in the school Late Book with an explanation as to why they are late.
- This is monitored by the Headteacher, who reports directly to the Governing Body.
- If a pattern arises, of children regularly arriving after 9:00am, then parents will be invited in to school to discuss this and the attendance team at the Local Authority made may informed.

- If children arrive after 9:00 a.m. they will be marked late. Children who arrive from 9am - 9:15am will be given a late code (L). After 9:15am children will be given a U code (unauthorised absence: late after registration close).

Collection

- All children must be picked up at 3:15pm; our staff have a variety of commitments after school - running clubs, staff meetings and courses and it should not be assumed that they are available to supervise children after this time.
- If a child is not collected on time, and the school has not been informed beforehand, this will be logged.
- Late collection will be monitored by the Headteacher and a meeting will be arranged with parents who regularly pick children up late.

Authorised and unauthorised absences

As the parent you are responsible for ensuring that once your child is registered at a school that they attend regularly and punctually. Starting good habits earlier on is much easier than trying to change poor attendance habits, battling with your child to attend school and struggling to get out of the door on time. Be organised, have a plan, be consistent and involve your child. School absence falls into one of two categories;

- **Authorised**, those which schools can give you permission for
- **Unauthorised**, those which they will not.

Examples of Authorised Absences:

- Genuine illness of the pupil
- Hospital / dental appointment for the pupil
- Death of a near relative
- Religious observance (Faith of the parent / carer)

Examples of Unauthorised Absence:

- Sickness of a parent, or other family member
- Inadequate clothing for school
- Child being used as a carer

- Problems with transport
- Non-urgent medical treatment - e.g. dental check-up, doctors' appointments for minor ailments. - these should be made for after 3:15pm when school finishes.
- School refusal or truancy
- Days off for birthdays, shopping trips
- Family Holiday

Whilst as a parent you may think you can give your child permission to be at home, you cannot. The only person who can give permission for a child to be absent from school is the school's Headteacher.

During school hours, the school staff are legally in loco parentis and therefore must know where the pupils are during the school day. If a pupil has to leave school for any reason during the school day, the parent / carer must contact the school with an explanation. Pupils leaving the school site during the day must sign out at the school office.

Leave of absence in term time

Whenever a child is, absent from school, the parent / carer should:

- Contact the school office before 9:15am on the first day of absence. (01782 512323)
- If no notification of absence is received, the school office will contact the parent / carer to ascertain the reason
- If your child is absent for more than 1 day you must contact the school office every morning.
- The Headteacher will decide whether to authorise the absence, depending upon the reason given.

Most childhood sickness that prevents school attendance will be classed as authorised absence. However, if your child is frequently absent from school due to sickness, we will ask that you provide medical evidence otherwise; we will stop authorising the absences and potentially seek advice from the Local authority or request that you come in for a meeting with the Headteacher and, possibly, the Locality Attendance Officer. This does not mean that as a school we do not believe you or your child, but that we want to do the best for you by ensuring your child can attend school as much as possible. We will do this by providing extra support such as accessing the school nursing team if needed or explore options such as a part-time timetable.

Reduce absence due to medical reasons by making non-urgent medical appointments for your child outside of school hours. Always let your child's school know the type of illness your child has that prevents them attending at the start of the school day. They will guide you as to whether your child needs to be absent from school all day and when they should be expected to return;

for example, if a child has sickness or diarrhoea they must be absent for 48hrs to ensure they do not pass the virus on to others in school.

Holidays in term time

Since September 2013 Headteachers have only been able to grant a leave of absence for exceptional circumstances. As a rule of thumb, a family holiday or travelling abroad is not considered to be an exceptional reason

Please note that children get 14 weeks holiday a year

There are 38 weeks in the year when schools are open, and 14 weeks when families can visit family overseas; go on holiday; travel; pupils can work, take educational trips, attend non-urgent medical appointments. The new legislation means that as of 1st September 2013 Headteachers cannot authorise any leave of absence during term time unless they are satisfied that there are “exceptional” circumstances to warrant the granting of leave. Fixed penalty notices may be served to parents who take their children out of school when authorisation has been denied.

As a result of these changes the Governing Body has made the following changes to our school attendance policy:

- Holidays will not be authorised in term time unless there is an exceptional circumstance.

Reasons for not authorising the request for leave **might** include:-

- Unsatisfactory attendance
- Time of year, e.g. if pupils are sitting Public Examinations
- If leave of absence has already been authorised during the current academic year
- It is a holiday request in school term time
- There does not appear to be an exceptional circumstance surrounding the request

Examples of exceptional circumstances are seen to be:

- being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time,
 - service personnel returning from/scheduled to embark on a tour of duty abroad
 - when it is company policy to take leave at a specified time of year” (evidence required)
 - when a holiday is recommended as part of a parent or child’s rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue (evidence required)
 - the wedding/funeral of an immediate family member or the birth of a sibling
 - when a family celebrates their cultural heritage and identity and falls during term time.
 - the holiday being a unique/one off experience never to be repeated which can only happen during term time. (evidence required)
- The Local Authority “request for leave” information and school forms need to be completed by parents/carers, and these can be obtained from the school office.

- All applications for “exceptional circumstance” leave must be made 6 weeks prior to the requested leave.
- All requests are considered by the Headteacher who will need to verifying the “exceptional circumstance.” (e.g. contacting employers for information)
- The decision will be made by the Headteacher, but the most stringent requirements shall be enforced.
- Parents may be asked to attend a meeting to discuss the application for exceptional leave.
- Parents will be informed by letter as to the outcome.

While decisions are to be made on a case by case basis, requests will **normally be refused**.

If parents, contrary to what the governors have said, still decide to take their child out of school, then the absence will be coded as “**unauthorised**”. This may lead to the school referring the matter to the Local Authority requesting a Fixed Penalty Notice to be issued.

Identification of pupils giving cause for concern

- Identification is made by the class teacher or office staff.
- The class teacher will contact parents/carers to raise the fact that it has been noticed and to see if there is anything the school can do to help.
- Concerns will be passed to the Headteacher, at the same time, who will monitor this over the next 2 weeks.
- If there is no improvement, the attendance warning letter (Appendix 1) will be sent to parents inviting them in for a meeting.
- We will monitor this for a further 2 weeks, if there is no further improvement then we will inform parents that the Local Authority Attendance Team will be contacted.
- If attendance has improved over the last 4 weeks, school will continue to monitor attendance to ensure improvement is maintained.

Fixed Penalty Notices

The Government have introduced Fixed Penalty Notices as a drive to improve attendance. All Fixed Penalty Notices are issue by the Local Authority and not the school.

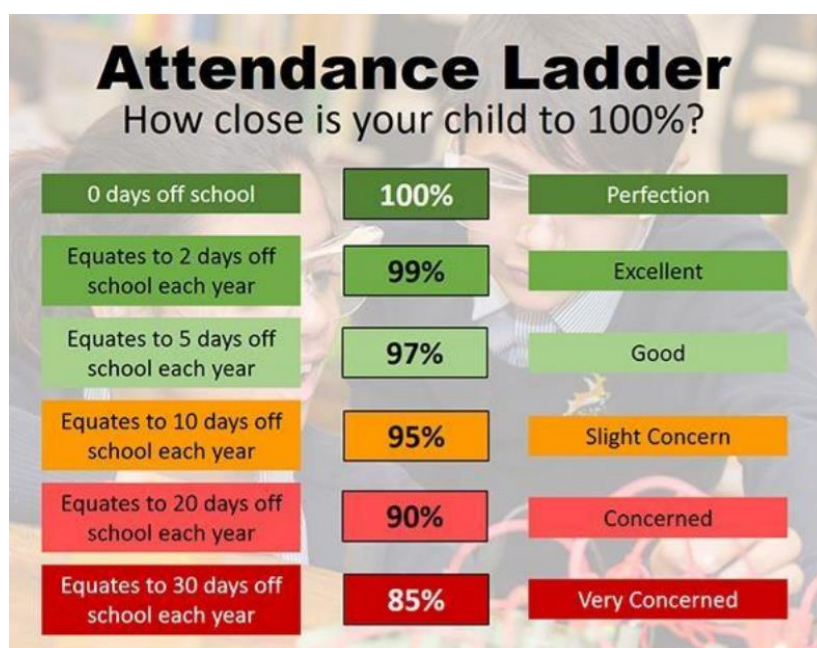
If a child has 10 unauthorised session absences (Late after register closes, unauthorised, unauthorised holiday), a penalty notice warning period request will be sent to the Attendance Support Team. Before this stage is reached, the school will have made contact with parents/carers to discuss the unauthorised codes and support the family where possible. This will follow the Steps for unauthorised absence (Appendix 2).

Penalties for unauthorised absence		
Timeline	One child	Two Children
Paid within 28 days	£60 per parent	£60 per child = £120 per parent
After 28 days	£120 per parent	£120 per child = £240 per parent
After 42 days	A summons to appear before the Magistrates' Court on the grounds you have failed to secure your child's regular attendance	A summons to appear before the Magistrates' Court on the grounds you have failed to secure your child's regular attendance

Why attendance and punctuality matter

Attendance

Across one school year:

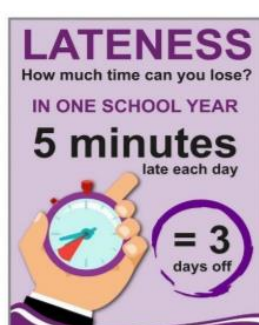


If a child achieves 80% attendance this means that they have missed approximately 39 days of education over the academic year, averaging 1 day per week.

If your child's attendance drops below 93%, or a pattern is emerging, then you will be contacted by a member of school staff.

Our attendance target is 97%

Punctuality



Appendix 1

Template Warning Letter

Insert Date

Dear **insert parent name**

It has been brought to my attention that your child has not been attending regularly at school. According to the Attendance Register, **insert child's name** attendance is currently **insert %**, this is below the schools expected attendance.

Insert child's name currently has **xx** unauthorised sessions, if this reaches 10 unauthorised sessions within 2 half terms then school can apply to the Local Authority to issue you with a Penalty Notice warning period, which could result in each parent receiving a £60.00 fine, increasing to £120.00 if not paid within 21 days.

I must remind you that S.444, Education Act 1996 requires you to make sure that your child comes to school, on time, every time the school is open. I am writing this letter to give you an opportunity to make sure that from now on and in future, your child attends school regularly.

If your child continues not attend regularly, I will have to refer you to the Local Authority and they may decide to pursue further action. These interventions may include,

(A) Issuing you with a Fixed Penalty Notice under S.444A Education Act 1996 which will make you liable to a penalty of up to £120. (As above)

(B) Initiating legal proceedings in the Magistrates Court under S.444(1) Education Act 1996. If convicted under this section, you may be fined up to £1000.

(C) Initiating legal proceedings in the Magistrates Court under S.444(1A) Education Act 1996. If convicted of this offence you may be fined up to £2,500 or be sent to prison for up to 3 months or both.

In order to avoid Local Authority intervention, please ensure your child attends school regularly and on time.

If there are any issues that may be impacting on your child's attendance, please contact **insert appropriate named person at school** to discuss further.

Yours sincerely,

Insert name signature

Headteacher

Appendix 2

School steps for unauthorised attendance

If the child/young person (YP) does not attend school as expected and no reason to authorise the absence is established, then the child will be coded in the register with an unauthorised mark.

Step 1

First day of unauthorised absence. School to make a telephone call to parents/carers, exploring barriers to attending and measures to support child back into school if fit and well. Where the child or parent has specific anxieties, this may highlight the need for a further discussion either face to face or remotely.

Step 2

If absence continues for 4-6 unauthorised 9 mix of U, O and G codes absences school to complete a home visit/invite parents in for a meeting/video meeting to explore barriers and offer support to enable child to attend.

As part of the traded service via Chess - The Attendance and Children Out of School Team can support home visits and meetings in school, please speak with your locality lead to gauge availability of the team to help with your required support. If mental health is identified as a barrier to attendance, consider a conversation with the Together in Education Lead.

Step 3

At 6-8 unauthorised absences school to send template letter (appendix 1) to each parent/carer to advise that if there are 10 unauthorised absences an Attendance and Children Out of School Team (ACOOS) referral for a 15-day warning period will be made, resulting in penalty notice if there is an unauthorised absence in the advised time period.

Step 4

Following a series of 10 unauthorised absences schools make a Penalty Notice Warning Period request to the Attendance and Children Out of School Team (ACOOS) Penalty notices: cepenaltnotices@cheshireeast.gov.uk alongside all evidence of contact made i.e. Telephone calls, Home visits, meetings and any support offered to the family to increase attendance.

Step 5

Attendance and Children Out of School Team process

The ACOOS team will triage the request within 5 working days and allocate to a locality worker for contact with family within 3 days. The locality worker then updates the request with information established from the family - this additional step has been introduced as a response to COVID19 and in the Principles of Attendance guidance to ensure children receive adequate support to return to school.

The ACOOS team panel will then review the request to decide whether a 15-day warning period will be issued. ACOOS panels meet on a weekly basis.

- If the panel feel a warning period is not appropriate and more support is required to the family to support the child into school, this recommendation will be made to the school. Recommendations could include: staff at gates to meet and greet, direct contact from a member of staff that has good relationship with the child, a package put in place to support transition back to school, a conversation with the Together in Education Lead or the school to lead on an Early Help to support the parent and child.
- If decided at the panel that a 15 day warning period is appropriate, parents / carers are issued with letter from the ACOOS team to advise them of the date the 15-day warning period commences and expectations in the period.
- School will be advised of the outcome of the panel by email within 2 working days.

If there is unauthorised absence in the 15-day warning period, then the panel will look at the case and agree whether a penalty notice will be issued.

Penalty notice fines are £60 if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid within 28 days per parent. If the fine is not paid a request is sent to the ACOOS Team Manager, Head of Service and Legal team for authorisation for prosecution.