

# Woodside Academy



## Attendance Policy

***“We want the very best teaching and learning experiences for our children”  
from School Vision Statement “Excellence Through Opportunity”***

Agreed by the Governing Body: October 2025

### Introduction

This document is a statement of aims, principles and strategies for Attendance. Government guidelines on attendance and punctuality have been taken into consideration in its foundation (including all current COVID-19 attendance guidance). The law entitles every child of school age to an efficient full-time education and it is the legal responsibility of every parent to ensure their child receives that education (Section 7, Education Act 1996).

The Department for Education (DfE) document “Working Together to improve school attendance, May 2022” states ‘Improving attendance is everyone’s business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex both within and beyond the school gates and often specific to individual pupils and families.’

Woodside Academy is a successful school that aims to provide the best available learning opportunities for children living in the local community. Without the help and support of parents, some children will find it difficult to adjust to the structured environment that schools have to be in order to achieve their objectives. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their time at school, it is vital that they attend regularly and arrive at school, on time, every day that the school is open unless the reason for absence is unavoidable.

We will work with children, families, the local authority and other partners to identify barriers to good attendance and offer support as appropriate. In cases where this offer of support fails to improve a child’s attendance, statutory action may become necessary.

Any absence that a child has from school affects them as their learning becomes disrupted and social interactions can also be affected. Regular absences will have a serious effect on their academic progress and can affect a child’s confidence within school.

Ensuring your child attends school regularly is your legal responsibility and allowing absence from school without good reason is an offence and may result in a prosecution.

We do understand that children are ill from time to time, individual pupil’s academic attainment/progress does suffer if they miss school on a regular basis. Also, coming in late to school can have a detrimental effect on a child’s progress and social wellbeing, as they find it difficult to settle and will inevitably miss assemblies and interventions. It also disturbs the class routines, which has a negative effect on other children’s learning.

**Why Regular Attendance is so important:**

| The effect of absence on progress                                                                                                                                        |                       |                                                                          |                       |                                                          |                       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>A whole year has 365 days; if a school year has between 187 days that leaves 178 days to spend on family time, visits, holidays, shopping and other appointments.</i> |                       |                                                                          |                       |                                                          |                       |
| No absence                                                                                                                                                               | 10 days absence       | 12 days absence                                                          | 19 days absence       | 29 days absence                                          | 38 days absence       |
| 187 days of education                                                                                                                                                    | 177 days of education | 175 days of education                                                    | 168 days of education | 158 days of education                                    | 149 days of education |
| 100%                                                                                                                                                                     | 95%                   | 94%                                                                      | 90%                   | 85%                                                      | 80%                   |
| Very Good                                                                                                                                                                |                       | Worrying                                                                 |                       | Serious Concern                                          |                       |
| Best chance of success. Gets your child off to a flying start.                                                                                                           |                       | Less chance of success. Makes it harder for your child to make progress. |                       | Your child will find it very difficult to make progress. |                       |

A few days a week/month can quickly build up –

| 365 days in a year       | <u>Attendance</u><br>187 school days in total/ 39 weeks | <u>Absence</u>                                  |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| 100% attendance          | 187 days                                                | 0                                               |
| 95% attendance           | 177 days                                                | 2 weeks absence                                 |
| 90% attendance           | 168 days                                                | 4 weeks absence                                 |
| 85% attendance           | 159 days                                                | 6 weeks absence                                 |
| 80% attendance           | 150 days                                                | Absence equal to the first school term Sept-Oct |
| 75% attendance and below | 140 days                                                | 9+ weeks absence                                |

### Attendance & Safeguarding

The safeguarding of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses attendance, behaviour management, health and safety, access to the Curriculum and anti-bullying.

**Your child may be at risk of harm if they are frequently absent so failing to attend school regularly will be considered as a safeguarding matter.**

## **The Law relating to attendance**

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that, 'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education suitable: -

- (a) to age, ability and aptitude and
- (b) to any special educational needs, he/she may have either by regularly attendance at school or otherwise'

## **The Law relating to safeguarding**

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

## **Absence Procedures:**

If your child is absent from school, you must:

- Call the school office as soon as possible on the first day of absence and inform us of the reason for the absence.
- An appointment card/appointment letter must be provided if taking your child out of school for a medical appointment; your child should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment and medical appointments should be booked outside of school hours.
- Provide the school with medical evidence of any absence lasting more than 3 consecutive days (i.e. medical note, medical appointment card, medicine bottle or copy of prescription)
- Provide the school with medical evidence for all future illness if your child has already had 5 different occasions in the school year when they have been absent due to illness or when attendance falls below 95%

If your child is absent from school, we will:

- Contact you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you, first by telephone then an email from ParentMail. This system gives assurance if your children walk to school alone as they know that they will be informed if they do not arrive.
- Complete a home visit if no contact is made to the school regarding your child's absence, or we have concerns regarding your child's attendance.
- Apply the attendance escalation stages once your child meets the stage criteria (attendance is monitored on a daily basis; however, earlier intervention may be applied – case by case knowledge).

## **STAGE 1: Letter to parents**

Attendance drops below 96% - Letter to parents/carers informing of 'below 96% attendance' – opportunity to discuss barriers regarding attendance with attendance/ pastoral team. Three weeks monitoring and review.

## **STAGE 2: Letter to parents & attendance meeting**

No improvement or further drop in attendance – letter sent to parents/carers for an internal school attendance meeting to be held by the attendance and pastoral team.

Barriers to attendance discussion & CAF (Common Assessment Framework) for additional support

Any further medical/illness absences – medical evidence needed (if not = unauthorised)

(If parent/carers do not attend meeting or fails to engage – meeting held and minutes recorded)

Parents/carers sent minutes of the meeting - 3-week monitoring and review meeting date agreed.

### **STAGE 3:**

No improvement or further drop in attendance - Letter to parents/carers for an in-school attendance formal meeting to be held by Designated attendance leads (Mrs Smith) and a member of the attendance/pastoral team. Formal warning of the risk of statutory action given.

A parenting contract will be written up and shared with parent/carers to sign, a copy of the meeting will be sent to parent/carers - 6-week monitoring and review meeting date agreed.

If no improvement is made or the parenting contract is breached, the school will consider Statutory action. An application for a Penalty Notice will be issued or referral made for prosecution to the Local Authority.

### **STAGE 4:**

Once the referral has been made to Thurrock Local Authority, all of the evidence from Stages 1 – 3 will be submitted to local authority for assessment. Penalty Notice/ Prosecution likely.

### **School Attendance Support Team (Thurrock Local Authority) (Stage 4)**

Thurrock School Attendance Support Team (SAST) are a team of experienced and highly professional officers providing the highest quality service to families, schools and other agencies in respect of school attendance. SAST support schools and academies in the promotion of positive attendance and provide a service where school attendance levels are a concern in line with the Education Act 1996.

Regular and punctual attendance at school is a legal requirement (Section 7 of the Education Act 1996) for pupils and is essential if pupils are to maximise the opportunities available to them. It is a parent's responsibility to ensure that their child attends regularly.

A child is of compulsory school age from the start of the term after their 5th birthday up until the last Friday of June in year 11.

An offence occurs:

- If a parent fails to ensure a child's attendance at a school at which they are a registered pupil and that absence is not authorised by the school; or
- An excluded child is found in a public place, without reasonable justification, during the first 5 school days of a formal exclusion from school.

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 (as defined in the Children Act 1989) for a child or young person; and any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person. Having care of a child means that person with whom the child lives and who looks after a child, irrespective of what their relationship is with that child, is considered to be a parent in education law."

A Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution and offers parents the opportunity to discharge their responsibility for the period of non-attendance by payment of a penalty rather than by prosecution through the Criminal Court. The use of a Penalty Notice should be considered at the earliest opportunity; if it is believed it will address the non-attendance before it becomes entrenched.

## Penalty Notices

Woodside Academy will follow the Thurrock Council Code of Conduct as part of its Attendance Policy.

Penalty Notices may be applied for:

- in line with Thurrock Council Code of Conduct for Irregular Attendance
- for unauthorised leave of absence/time leave
- if an excluded child is found in a public place, without their parent, during the first 5 days of a formal exclusion from school

### Circumstances in which a Penalty Notice may be issued;

#### Irregular Attendance

Penalty Notices can only be issued in respect of unauthorised absence, when the following criteria are met:

- At least 12 sessions of unauthorised absence are recorded against the pupil's name within 120 available sessions. (one session is a half day)
- Parents must first be sent a letter warning that a Penalty Notice could be issued and allowing them 30 school days to evidence a commitment to improving their child's attendance (See Appendix A of Thurrock Penalty Notice Code of Conduct for Unauthorised Absence from School document).

#### Unauthorised Leave of Absence (term time holiday)

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 were amended in 2013 so that references to family holiday (including reference to Principal/Chair of Governors allowing up to 10 school days for a term time holiday) and extended leave were removed. The amendments make clear that Principals/Chair of Governors may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Principal/Chair of Governors should determine the number of school days the child may be away from school if the leave is granted.

Penalty Notices can only be issued in respect of unauthorised absence and must meet the following criteria.

- If a Principals/Chair of Governors does not authorise a request from a parent for term time leave of absence and the parent takes the leave
- There must be at least 10 consecutive sessions of unauthorised term time leave

A Penalty Notice is set by regulation at £80 if paid within 21 calendar days (after the date of issue), rising to £160 if paid after 21 calendar days but within 28 calendar days.

Please note that penalty notices set are issued per parent per child.

**Please see 'Thurrock Penalty Notice Code of Conduct for Unauthorised Absence from School' for full details.**



## Exclusions

- Where a pupil of compulsory school age who has been excluded from school, either for a fixed period or permanently is found to be present in a public place during school hours in the first five days of the exclusion, without reasonable justification.

Parents must apply for leave of absence in advance of taking it, failure to do so will result in the absence being marked as an unauthorised absence code 'O' rather than an unauthorised holiday code 'G'. All applications need to be made at least 4 weeks before the period of absence and before personal and travel arrangements are made.

If the absence is not authorised and the holiday taken, the Absence Procedure will be followed as necessary. If a leave of absence is taken, staff will not set extra work for children to do during their absence or on their return.

## Lateness

### The doors open for all year groups at 8:45am

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day, it can have a detrimental effect on their progress, they find it hard to settle and they will miss vital introductions for the lesson plans that day. It also disturbs the class routines, which has a negative effect on other children's learning.

Please ensure that all medical appointments are made outside of the school day. If this is not possible, then your child should attend school before and after the appointment to ensure they obtain their 'present' mark. We will require medical evidence for that period of time to be authorised.

Children are expected to be in school for 8:45am when the bell goes for the start of school. Any child who arrives after this time will be given a late mark which will remain on your child's record. Registration is considered closed 10 minutes after the beginning of the school day which is 8:55 am for all children. Children who arrive after this time will be recorded as late "after registration closed" which is as an unauthorised absence. Parents whose children have continual lateness will be sent a letter as stated below and asked to attend punctuality meetings.

We will send a ParentMail if your child receives a late mark. Children who are persistently late will be monitored. If the late marks continue, parents will be contacted by the attendance/pastoral team to discuss these barriers and support offered to improve.

If you are having problems getting your child into school, please come and speak to the Attendance and Pastoral team who will be able to offer support and help. We do run a Breakfast club starting from 7:15am which could be beneficial to you.

### Understanding types of absence:

An electronic register (which is an important and legal document) is taken in the school every morning and afternoon. Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents) as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED when inputted onto the system. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required by the school.

- **AUTHORISED** absences are sessions away from the school for a good reason such as illness, medical/dental appointments (which unavoidably fall in school time), emergencies or other unavoidable situations. Obviously, children do need to be kept off school if they are too ill to attend, however, if they are simply 'not feeling right' or are just tired then this will not be

authorised. It is also important that a child returns to school as soon as possible after feeling unwell, for example, it is not acceptable not to send a child back to school on Friday simply because they have been unwell Monday-Thursday.

- **UNAUTHORISED** absences are sessions away from the school which the school deems unreasonable. Unauthorised absences include:
  - parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
  - truancy before or during the school day
  - absences which have not been properly explained
  - children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
  - shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
  - day trips and holidays in term time

### **Persistent Absenteeism (PA)**

A pupil is classed a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason, both authorised and unauthorised absences. Absence at this level is causing considerable damage to any child's progress and educational prospects. Please refer to the escalation policy on page 7.

### **Unauthorised Leave of Absence (term time holiday)**

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 have been amended so that from 1st September 2013 references to family holiday (including reference to Principals/Chair of Governors allowing up to 10 school days for a term time holiday) and extended leave have been removed. The amendments make clear that a designated member of the Governing body (normally the Chair of Governors) may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The designated member of the Governing body should determine the number of school days the child may be away from school if the leave is granted.

**At Woodside Academy, the designated governor for attendance is Aimee Joiner**

Parents must apply for leave of absence in advance of taking it, failure to do so will result in the absence being marked as an unauthorised absence code 'O' rather than an unauthorised holiday code 'G'. All applications need to be made at least 4 weeks before the period of absence and before personal and travel arrangements are made.  
(Request for Leave form – please see appendix 1)

If the absence is not authorised and the holiday taken, the Absence Procedure will be followed as necessary. If a leave of absence is taken, staff will not set extra work for children to do during their absence or on their return.

### **How we promote, monitor, improve and maintain attendance**

- **Weekly**: Awarding 'Class of the Week' to the highest attending class in each Key Stage in our weekly Celebration Assembly on a Friday. These classes are awarded an attendance trophy to display in their class for the following week and receive extra playtime on the Friday.
- **Termly**: Children who have 100 % attendance will receive a termly reward.
- **End of school year**: Children achieving 100% attendance at the end of the year will celebrate at our Summer Read day in July and receive both a reward and certificate.

Please note - Individual pupil incentive schemes are used for pupils with low attendance, this is done sensitively to encourage and reward pupils for achieving their personal attendance target.

## Engaging Parents

We will offer support to all families of the children of Woodside who engage and involve the school of any problems/barriers which may affect your child's attendance. If we are unaware of these, then absences will continue to be unauthorised when you will be invited to an Attendance Meeting. The purpose of this meeting will give you an opportunity to discuss the reasons for your child's poor attendance/persistent lateness and for us to offer support and ensure your child gets to school every day on time. An action plan will be drawn up at every meeting with targets agreed with respect to their attendance/persistent lateness.

We review children's attendance half termly and we will request evidence for medical appointments and parents unable to provide evidence will find absence is unauthorised.

## Exclusion

A pupil of compulsory school age who has been excluded from school, either for a fixed period or permanently is not allowed to be present in a public place during school hours in the first five days of the exclusion, without reasonable justification. The parent must have been notified in writing by the school at the time of the exclusion of this and the days to which it applies.

### Those responsible for attendance matters in this school:

In order for the school's Attendance Policy to be successful, every member of staff must make attendance a high priority and convey this to the pupils at all times. Parents/carers need to support these views in the home to ensure that children are receiving corresponding messages about the value of education.

In addition to this, the following staff have specific attendance related responsibilities:

- **Class Teacher** – To complete registers accurately and punctually at least twice daily, informing the attendance team of any correspondence from parents. Any concerns regarding a child's attendance should be discussed with Attendance/Pastoral team. The class teacher will also discuss attendance at Parent/Carer evening which take place twice throughout the academic year (October & March).
- **Office** - To ensure children who are late or absent are added to the electronic register including recording reasons and first day absence calls are made when parents have not notified the school of an absence; to alert the Attendance/Pastoral team if unable to make contact as a home visit may be necessary or the child may need to be reported as missing. Next step is to notify the Designated Safeguard Lead of any issues concerning pupil absence.
- **Attendance and Pastoral Team** – To oversee the registration process and liaise with class teachers over attendance concerns; to alert parents over pupil absence and for frequent lateness and to closely monitor all identified children; promote good attendance within the school with assemblies, achievement certificates and rewards. Also, to send letters and attend meetings as per the Attendance procedure as per page 4.
- **Designated Attendance Lead (Mrs Smith)** – to oversee the Attendance/Pastoral Teams actions and to attend meetings if stage 3 is met.
- **Principal and Governors** – To ensure all attendance procedures are carried out in accordance with the Attendance Policy and to work with the Principal to raise the profile of attendance within the school and deal with the attendance issues that arise. To also authorise Stage 4 of the escalation process (Local Authority Penalty Notice).