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WOODFORD COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

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1. Aims

The school is committed to ensuring that all pupils benefit from high levels of attendance and punctuality, recognising that regular school attendance is fundamental to pupils' academic success, personal development, wellbeing and safeguarding.

Attendance is everyone's responsibility and is embedded within the culture, values and daily practice of the school. We promote a strong sense of belonging, where pupils feel safe, supported and motivated to attend, and where barriers to attendance are identified and addressed at the earliest opportunity.

We fulfil our statutory duties in line with current legislation and Department for Education guidance, adopting a **support-first approach** that prioritises early intervention, inclusive practice, and partnership with families and external agencies.

Our aims are to:

- **Promote a culture of high expectations** where excellent attendance and punctuality are the norm for all pupils
- **Ensure every pupil can access their full educational entitlement**, enabling them to achieve their potential
- **Act early to identify, understand and remove barriers to attendance**, including those linked to mental health, SEND, and wider vulnerability
- **Reduce absence at all levels**, including persistent and severe absence, through targeted and proportionate intervention
- **Prioritise disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils**, ensuring that attendance gaps between groups diminish over time
- **Work in partnership with parents/carers and external agencies** to secure sustained improvements in attendance
- **Use attendance data intelligently and regularly** to inform strategic decision-making and evaluate the impact of interventions
- **Apply a graduated response to attendance**, moving from universal support to targeted intervention and, where necessary, formal or legal action

The school aims for overall attendance to be at or above national averages, with an aspirational target of **97% or higher**, and is committed to continuous improvement in attendance outcomes for all pupils.

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Safeguarding Statement

Attendance is a safeguarding priority. Poor attendance may be an indicator of wider vulnerability, including risks relating to abuse, neglect, exploitation or mental health needs. All attendance concerns are therefore considered within the school's safeguarding framework, and appropriate action is taken promptly in line with safeguarding procedures.

The school is committed to ensuring that pupils who are absent from education are swiftly identified, supported and protected.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#) (August 2024) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)

Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)

Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)

[The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 and 2024 amendments\)](#)

[The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2024](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The Governing Board

The Governing Board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data

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- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

Governors receive regular updates on attendance trends, including the attendance of key groups, and provide appropriate challenge to ensure continuous improvement.

3.2 The Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary via application to the local authority.

3.3 The Designated Senior Leader responsible for attendance (Senior Attendance Champion): Assistant Headteacher (Pastoral) - Mrs Mellisa Greenfield

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the Pastoral and Safeguarding Teams
- Advising the Headteacher on the issue of fixed-term penalties and monitoring this process.
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of the analysis of attendance data analysis
- Working alongside the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) to devise specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues

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- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Ensuring attendance is prioritised as part of safeguarding practice and is reflected within the school's safeguarding culture and procedures.

3.4 Teaching staff

Teaching staff (form tutors) are responsible for recording session attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes [/] for AM registration. PM session registration is linked with the P4 class registration.

Class teachers should register their classes within the first 10 minutes of the lesson by using the correct codes. Where students are late, the lateness and reason should be recorded on the school's MIS.

Any [N] codes (no reason given) count as an unauthorised absence and will be amended by the Attendance Officer within 5 days. If no reason is provided during this time, this will be amended to unauthorised absence [O] code.

3.5 Attendance Officer and KS5 Pastoral Assistant

The Attendance officer and KS5 Pastoral Assistant will:

- Check the accurate recording of late, [L] codes where students arrived at school after 08:30
- Receive communications from parents (and students in the sixth form) about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system.
- Call home to check where absence has not been notified.
- Communicate information from parents (and pupils) to the Pastoral Teams to provide them with more detailed information to support attendance.

3.6 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Ensure their child attends every day the school is open, except where a valid statutory reason applies.
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 08:30am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence and advise when they are expected to return.

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- Provide the school with additional proof to authenticate reasons for absence (See section 4.2).
- Provide the school with medical authorisation where absences are greater than **five school days or where patterns of absence emerge** (See section 4.2).
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day.
- Ensure that any unavoidable absence from school is minimised.

3.7 Students

Students are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time (School starts at 08:30): **arrive by 08:20 and be ready for the start of school at 08:30.**
- Attend every timetabled session on time
- Sixth form students call the school to report their absence before 09:00 on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence.

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day (AM registration) and once during the second session (Period 4). It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry;
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment

- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
- We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 08:20 on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 08:30 and will be kept open until 09:00. The register for the second session will be taken at 12:20pm and will be kept open until 12:50pm.

The school will use attendance codes in line with the most up-to-date Department for Education guidance and the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, including all updated and additional codes introduced from September 2024.

Staff are trained to ensure that codes are applied consistently and accurately, and that any uncertainties are resolved promptly to ensure the integrity of attendance data.

The school will use attendance codes in line with the most up-to-date Department for Education guidance and the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carers must notify the school of the reason for the/ absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 08:30am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school via the Attendance Officer (or KS5 student themselves via the KS5 Pastoral Support Assistant) (see also section 7). Parents **must** continue to contact the school on every day of absence.

The school will apply professional judgement when authorising illness absence and will not routinely request medical evidence in line with Department for Education guidance.

Medical evidence may be requested where it is considered appropriate, proportionate and necessary, for example:

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- where there are concerns about the authenticity of absence
- where a pattern of absence is identified
- where absence is prolonged or frequent

Where medical evidence is requested, this will be done in a reasonable and supportive manner and may include prescriptions, appointment confirmations, or other appropriate documentation.

The school recognises that barriers to accessing medical evidence may exist and will take this into account when making decisions about authorisation.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment (that cannot take place outside of school hours) will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carers notifies the school in advance of the appointment **and** where evidence of the appointment is provided.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carers must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late (not present for registration at 8:30am):

Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code, [L]

After the register has closed (from 09:00) will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code, [U]. Persistent lateness of this nature may result in a penalty notice being issued.

Students are identified as being late if they are not in registration at 8:30am. Students who arrive late are given a 15-minute late detention on the day of the offence.

If lateness is persistent, a member of the Pastoral Team will determine if there is a genuine reason for lateness. This is achieved by meeting with the child and where necessary with the parent/carers.

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The school aims to eliminate the reason for lateness and rather than sanction needlessly. Persistent lateness after the close of registration may generate a penalty notice being issued.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may contact social services if the child is known to be vulnerable and will refer to the Educational Welfare Advisory & Support Service Ltd (EWASS). The EWO may conduct a home visit to ascertain the reason of absence or may invite parents/carers to a school-based meeting.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – **this will be no later than 5 working days after the session**
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer for a home visit and report the child missing education to the local authority.

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents/carers about their child's attendance and absence and lateness levels via the child's termly report. Where a child's absence is of concern (less than 95% from week 5 of half-term 1 and onwards) a letter will be sent home to identify this concern. Further correspondence and calls home will be made to parents where the child's attendance fails to improve (*As stated in Section 7.4*). The Designated Attendance Champion will also communicate to the whole school *via* the school bulletins for matters concerning whole school attendance and punctuality.

4.7 Attendance data sharing

The school will meet all statutory requirements in relation to the sharing of attendance data. Where required, this includes the submission of daily attendance data to the Department for Education and/or local authority in line with current regulations.

Attendance data is shared securely and used to:

- support local and national monitoring of attendance

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- identify pupils at risk of persistent or severe absence
- enable timely and coordinated support for pupils and families

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances' in accordance with Government Guidelines. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' to be an emergency such as a bereavement.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, considering the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least two weeks before the absence. The DfE state that leave of absence cannot be granted retrospectively. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence. If leave of absence is taken without permission of the Headteacher, parents/carers will be issued with a Penalty Notice by the Local Authority which is £160 per parent, per child.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes (*mobile pupils only*) – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school.

Other possible 'exceptional circumstances' include where the [headteacher/head of school] may grant term-time holiday include

- Compassionate leave
- Events that result in the LBR providing a child license for performances

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5.2 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents (Penalty Notice) for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age (at WCHS, this is until the last Friday in June for a child turning 16 by the end of the summer holidays).

In line with the national framework introduced in August 2024, the school will consider, on a case-by-case basis, requesting a penalty notice where a pupil has accrued 10 sessions (equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period.

Prior to requesting a penalty notice, the school may issue a **Notice to Improve**, giving parents a defined period to engage with support and improve attendance.

On the issuing of the first PCN, **each parent** must pay £80 within 21 days or £160 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority. If a second PCN is issued, **each parent** must pay £160 within 28 days, there is no reduction in the fee payable. No more than two PCNs can be issued over a period of three years. If there are further unauthorised attendance concerns, legal proceedings may ensue.

Penalty notices can be requested by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police but issuing of the penalty is carried out by the local authority. ***The payment of the penalty notice is to the local authority.***

The decision on whether to issue a penalty notice may consider:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason
- If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

The school will ensure that appropriate support has been offered and that reasonable efforts have been made to engage families before escalation to legal intervention, unless the absence is for an unauthorised holiday or other exceptional case.

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6. Strategies for promoting attendance

The school promotes excellent attendance through a **whole-school culture of high expectations, inclusion, belonging and care**, where all pupils understand the importance of attending school regularly and feel supported to do so.

We recognise that improving attendance is not solely about compliance, but about **removing barriers, supporting wellbeing and fostering engagement with learning**. Our approach is therefore **proactive, relational and responsive**, underpinned by strong partnerships with pupils, families, and external agencies.

6.1 Universal Attendance Promotion (Wave 1)

The school ensures that all pupils and families have a clear understanding of the importance of attendance through:

- Consistent communication of expectations through assemblies, tutor time and the curriculum
- Promotion of positive attendance as a key driver of academic success and future opportunities
- Clear routines and high expectations around punctuality and readiness to learn
- A strong pastoral system that supports pupils' sense of belonging and engagement
- Regular communication with parents/carers regarding attendance, including reporting and guidance

Attendance is celebrated and reinforced through:

- Recognition of excellent and improved attendance in assemblies and communications
- Positive reinforcement strategies that promote motivation and engagement
- Whole-school messaging that values attendance as part of the school's culture

6.2 Targeted Support and Early Intervention (Wave 2)

Where attendance concerns emerge, the school acts **swiftly and proportionately** to prevent escalation.

Strategies include:

- Early identification of attendance concerns through regular data analysis

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- Timely communication with parents/carers to understand underlying factors
- Pastoral support through form tutors, Heads of Year and the Attendance Team
- Attendance mentoring and individual support plans
- Consideration of contextual factors such as mental health, SEND, bullying or family circumstances

Interventions are **tailored to individual need** and may include:

- Adjustments to the school day or support with transitions
- Access to wellbeing and mental health support
- Academic support to re-engage pupils with learning
- Close monitoring and regular review meetings with families

6.3 Intensive and Multi-Agency Support (Wave 3)

For pupils with persistent or severe absence, the school implements **coordinated and sustained intervention**, working in partnership with external agencies where appropriate.

This may include:

- Involvement of the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO)
- Multi-agency support involving health services, social care or other professionals
- Formal attendance meetings and attendance contracts
- Development of personalised reintegration plans
- Use of part-time timetables in exceptional circumstances, in line with statutory guidance

All interventions are:

- Time-limited and regularly reviewed
- Focused on enabling a **return to full-time education**
- Agreed in partnership with parents/carers and relevant professionals

6.4 Graduated Response and Escalation

The school adopts a **graduated response to attendance**, ensuring that support is prioritised before formal action is considered.

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This includes:

1. Early identification and universal support
2. Targeted intervention and monitoring
3. Formal support mechanisms (e.g. attendance contracts, Notice to Improve)
4. Legal intervention where necessary, in line with statutory guidance

The school ensures that **all reasonable support has been offered** and that families have been given the opportunity to engage before escalation, except in cases such as unauthorised holidays.

6.5 Evaluating Impact

The effectiveness of attendance strategies is **regularly reviewed and evaluated** through:

- Analysis of attendance data at pupil, cohort and whole-school level
- Reduction in persistent and severe absence
- Improved engagement and punctuality
- Feedback from pupils, parents and staff

Leaders use this evaluation to **refine practice, target resources effectively, and ensure continuous improvement** in attendance outcomes.

7. Attendance monitoring

The school maintains a **rigorous and systematic approach to monitoring attendance**, ensuring that concerns are identified early, addressed effectively, and evaluated for impact. Attendance data is used strategically to drive improvement at individual, group and whole-school level.

Attendance information is recorded using the school's data management system and is **regularly analysed by the Senior Attendance Champion in collaboration with the Attendance Officer, pastoral leaders and the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO).**

7.1 Monitoring Attendance

The school monitors attendance at multiple levels to ensure accuracy, accountability and timely intervention. This includes:

- **Daily monitoring** of attendance and punctuality to identify immediate concerns

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- **Fortnightly and half-termly analysis** of trends across year groups, cohorts and vulnerable groups
- **Termly and annual review** of whole-school attendance patterns and outcomes

Leaders routinely scrutinise attendance data to:

- Identify pupils at risk of persistent or severe absence
- Detect emerging patterns, including punctuality concerns
- Highlight variation between groups

Particular attention is given to key groups, including:

- Disadvantaged pupils
- Pupils with SEND
- Looked after children and previously looked after children
- Pupils with a history of low attendance
- Pupils experiencing social, emotional or mental health challenges

The school ensures that **attendance gaps between groups are identified and actively reduced over time**.

7.2 Analysing Attendance

Leaders undertake **regular and detailed analysis of attendance data** to inform decision-making and target support effectively.

This includes:

- Identifying individual pupils and cohorts requiring additional support
- Analysing trends over time, including historic and emerging patterns
- Benchmarking attendance against national and local data
- Evaluating the effectiveness of existing interventions

Attendance data is **shared regularly with staff**, including form tutors, Heads of Year and senior leaders, to ensure a **consistent and informed response across the school**.

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7.3 Using Data to Improve Attendance

Attendance data is used proactively to drive improvement and ensure that interventions are **timely, targeted and effective**.

The school will:

- Develop and implement **personalised support plans** for pupils whose attendance is a concern
- Allocate pastoral and external support based on identified need
- Monitor the impact of interventions through regular review cycles
- Adjust strategies in response to evidence and outcomes

Leaders evaluate impact through:

- Improvements in individual pupil attendance
- Reduction in persistent absence (below 90%)
- Reduction in severe absence (below 50%)
- Improved punctuality and engagement with learning

This ensures that attendance strategies are **continuously refined and responsive to need**.

Evaluating impact of attendance strategies

Leaders evaluate the effectiveness of attendance strategies through a robust cycle of review, ensuring that provision leads to sustained improvement. This includes:

- tracking changes in attendance for individual pupils and cohorts over time
- measuring reductions in persistent and severe absence
- evaluating the impact of specific interventions and support plans
- using qualitative information, including pupil and parent voice, to understand lived experience

Where strategies are not having the intended impact, leaders adapt and refine approaches swiftly to ensure that support remains effective and responsive to need.

7.4 Reducing Persistent and Severe Absence

The school adopts a **graduated and proactive approach** to reducing persistent and severe absence.

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Persistent absence is defined as attendance below 90%, and severe absence as attendance below 50%.

The school will:

- Identify pupils at risk early and provide targeted intervention
- Communicate regularly with parents/carers regarding concerns
- Hold structured meetings with families to agree support strategies
- Implement attendance plans, contracts and formal monitoring where appropriate
- Work in partnership with the local authority and EWO to provide additional support

Where appropriate, the school will:

- Issue a **Notice to Improve**, clearly outlining expectations, support and timescales
- Escalate concerns in line with statutory guidance where improvement is not secured

All actions are underpinned by a **support-first approach**, ensuring that barriers to attendance are addressed before formal or legal intervention is pursued.

7.5 Working with External Agencies

The school works collaboratively with external partners to support pupils with complex attendance needs. This may include:

- Educational Welfare Officers (EWO)
- Local authority services
- Health and mental health services
- Social care and safeguarding teams

Information is shared appropriately and in line with statutory requirements to ensure a **coordinated and effective multi-agency response**.

7.6 Safeguarding and Attendance

Attendance monitoring is a key component of the school's safeguarding practice.

The school will:

- Act promptly on unexplained or prolonged absence

- Conduct appropriate follow-up, including home visits where necessary
- The school fulfils its statutory duty in relation to Children Missing Education (CME).
Where a pupil is absent without explanation for a prolonged period, or where there are concerns that a pupil may no longer be in education, the school will:
 - make reasonable enquiries to establish the pupil's whereabouts
 - work in partnership with the local authority and relevant agencies
 - make a referral to the local authority CME team in line with statutory timescales and local protocols
- All actions are recorded and undertaken in line with safeguarding procedures, ensuring that pupils are protected and that risks are identified and managed promptly.
- Ensure that absence is always considered in the context of potential vulnerability

Attendance concerns are **escalated in line with safeguarding procedures**, ensuring that pupils are protected and supported.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be published on the school website and made accessible to parents, carers, staff and pupils, ensuring transparency and shared understanding of expectations.

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum two years by the Assistant Headteacher responsible for attendance and punctuality. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour policy