Woodlands School

Attendance Policy

REVIEWED: September 2026

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TOGETHER WE RAISE ASPIRATIONS FOR INDEPENDENCE AND LIFELONG LEARNING

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ATTENDANCE POLICY STATEMENT FOR WOODLANDS SCHOOL

We are a Rights Respecting School and this policy is underpinned by our continued work of our commitment to UNICEF and the UN Convention of Rights of the Child. This policy links directly to the following articles of the UN Convention of the Rights of the child. Children's rights and responsibilities:

- Article 28 - Every child has the right to an education. Primary education must be free. Secondary education must be available for every child. Discipline in schools must respect children's dignity. Richer countries must help poorer countries achieve this.
- Article 29 - Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment.
- Article 30 - Every child has the right to learn and use the language, customs and religion of their family, regardless of whether these are shared by the majority of the people in the country where they live.

Statement of intent

Woodlands School believes that regular attendance is central to safeguarding, wellbeing, belonging, progress and access to education. As a specialist SEND setting, we recognise that barriers to attendance can be complex and may arise from disability, health needs, anxiety, communication needs, sensory needs, transport, family circumstances or a combination of factors.

Our approach is therefore support-led, child-centred and individualised. We maintain high expectations for attendance while making reasonable adjustments, working with families and professionals, and avoiding blanket or punitive responses that fail to take account of a pupil's needs.

- Promote a culture in which attendance is everyone's responsibility and good attendance is valued.
- Expect parents to meet their duty under section 7 of the Education Act 1996 to secure suitable full-time education for children of compulsory school age.
- Identify absence and emerging patterns early and work with families to understand and remove barriers.

- Use the 'support first' approach in statutory attendance guidance, escalating to formal intervention only where support has not worked, has not been engaged with, or is not appropriate.
- Meet duties under the Equality Act 2010.
- Treat unexplained, persistent or changing patterns of absence as a potential safeguarding indicator and respond in line with safeguarding procedures.
- Work effectively with the Local Authority (LA) and other agencies where statutory or multi-agency action is required.

Legal framework

This policy has due regard to current legislation and statutory guidance, including:

- Education Act 1996
- Education Act 2002.
- Children Acts 1989 and 2004.
- Equality Act 2010.
- Children and Families Act 2014.
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.
- Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended in 2024.
- Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014.
- Department for Education, Working together to improve school attendance - statutory guidance, updated July 2026.
- Department for Education, Keeping children safe in education 2026.
- Department for Education, Children missing education: statutory guidance for local authorities and schools, September 2025.
- Department for Education guidance on supporting pupils at school with medical conditions and education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs.
- NHS guidance, Is my child too ill for school?

This policy should be read alongside the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Behaviour Policy, Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy, Children Missing Education procedures, Complaints Procedure and any policy relating to pupils with additional health needs.

Roles and Responsibilities

The governing board has overall responsibility for:

- Monitoring the implementation of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- Ensuring that this policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation.
- Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the school's Complaints Procedures Policy.
- Having regard to 'Keeping children safe in education' when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- Ensuring there is a Children Missing Education Policy in place and that this is regularly reviewed and updated.

The headteacher is responsible for:

- The day-to-day implementation and management of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- Ensuring all parents are aware of the school's attendance expectations and procedures.
- Ensuring that every student has access to full-time education and will act as early as possible to address patterns of absence.

Staff are responsible for:

- Following this policy and ensuring students do so too.
- Ensuring this policy is implemented fairly and consistently.
- Modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual students to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated.
- Where designated, taking the attendance register at the relevant times during the school day.

Family Liaison Officer (FLO)

Routine attendance monitoring, family-facing intervention and attendance support are led within school by the Family Liaison Officer, under the direction of the Headteacher.

- Monitor and analyse individual attendance and punctuality information and identify emerging patterns early.
- Make timely, supportive contact with families when attendance begins to decline.
- Explore barriers to attendance with pupils and families using communication approaches appropriate to the pupil's needs.
- Coordinate attendance meetings and, where appropriate, individual attendance support plans.
- Undertake supportive home visits where appropriate, in accordance with safeguarding and lone-working procedures. With class teams, the DSL, SEND staff, health professionals, transport services, social care, Early Help and other relevant agencies.
- Support reintegration following periods of absence and review the impact of agreed adjustments and support.
- Maintain accurate records of contacts, meetings, visits, actions, referrals and outcomes.
- Escalate safeguarding concerns immediately to the DSL and attendance concerns to the Senior Attendance Champion.
- Act as the key operational link with the LA Pupil Welfare / School Attendance Service where statutory attendance action or LA functions are required.

Local Authority Pupil Welfare / School Attendance Service

The school remains covered by and will work with the LA service for statutory attendance and Children Missing Education functions. The LA service is not the school's routine attendance-monitoring service.

LA involvement may include statutory advice or action relating to Children Missing Education, reasonable joint enquiries, statutory attendance returns or notifications, admission-register matters, School Attendance Orders, Education Supervision Orders, penalty notices, prosecution and other legal interventions.

The Family Liaison Officer does not exercise statutory enforcement powers that rest with the LA or other authorised bodies. Where formal action is being considered, the school will follow national guidance and the LA's current code of conduct and procedures.

Parents are responsible for:

- Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details.
- Providing the school with more than one emergency contact number.
- Updating the school if their details change.
- The attendance of their children at school.
- Promoting good attendance with their children.

Definitions

The following definitions apply for the purposes of this policy:

Absence:

- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Not attending school for any reason

Authorised absence:

- An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave
- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time, for which the school has granted leave
- Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave
- An absence due to a family emergency

Unauthorised absence:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Absence due to shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Absence due to day trips and holidays in term-time
- Leaving school for no reason during the day

Persistent absenteeism: (In line with DfE expectations, this includes any pupil missing 10% or more sessions, triggering statutory escalation procedures.)

- Missing 10 percent or more of schooling across the year for any reason

Training of staff

The school will recognise that early intervention can prevent poor attendance. As such, staff will receive training in identifying potentially at-risk students as part of their induction and refresher training.

Teachers and support staff will receive training on this policy as part of their induction. Following this initial training, staff will receive regular and ongoing advice as part of their development.

Staff will understand that increased absence from school could indicate a safeguarding concern and know how such concerns should be managed.

Student expectations

Students are expected to attend school every day. Their attendance should be at, or above, 95 percent throughout the year.

Students at risk of persistent absence (PA)

The school will ensure it provides support to students at risk of persistent absence, in line with the DfE's escalation model (universal, targeted, and intensive support stages). (PA), in conjunction with all relevant external authorities, where necessary.

The SLT will:

- Establish a range of evidence-based interventions to address barriers to attendance.
- Monitor the implementation and quality of escalation procedures and seek robust evidence of the escalation procedures that work.
- Attend or lead attendance reviews in line with escalation procedures.
- Establish robust escalation procedures which will be initiated before absence becomes a problem by:
    - Sending letters to parents.
    - Close liaison with health professionals and the pupil's wider professional network.
    - Review through the EHCP / annual review process where attendance concerns indicate that needs or provision may require reconsideration.
    - Early consideration of transport barriers and liaison with the LA where transport is normally provided.
    - A planned, time-limited reintegration or temporary reduced timetable only where this is in the pupil's best interests and compliant with statutory guidance

Where a student at risk of PA is also at increased risk of harm, the school will work in conjunction with all relevant authorities, e.g. social services, to support the student in line with the school's duty of care.

Where a student becomes at risk of PA, the school will:

- Establish plans to remove barriers and provide additional support.
- Make regular contact with families to discuss progress.
- Consider what support for re-engagement might be needed, including for vulnerable groups.

The school attendance system will be used to give an accurate and informative view of attendance, reasons for absence and patterns within groups, including:

- Children in need
- LAC
- Students who are eligible for FSM
- Students with EAL

Absence procedures

Parents will be required to contact the school office either through telephone, Tapestry or Arbor SMS as soon as possible on the first day of their child's absence.

A text message will be made to the parent of any student who has not reported their child's absence on the first day that they do not attend school.

The school will always follow up any absences in order to (as part of its statutory safeguarding duty under KCSIE 2026):

- Ascertain the reason for the absence.
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is being taken.
- Identify whether the absence is authorised or not.
- Identify the correct code to use to enter the data onto the school census system.

In the case of PA, arrangements will be made for parents to speak to the School and Family Liaison Officer.

The School FLO and Headteacher meet each half term to discuss Pupil Attendance. If a student's attendance has dropped below 95 percent they will be marked as monitored and their attendance will be discussed at each meeting to determine any actions.

Should a child's attendance drop below 90 percent the reasons for absence will be discussed and actions may include:

- Letter home to invite parents into a meeting
- Telephone conversation
- Discussion at annual review
- Work from home pack for those with persistent absence for medical reasons

Where a student has not returned to school for 10 days after an authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for 10 consecutive school days, the school will follow the children missing from education protocol. If the school has greater concerns they may act before a student has been absent for 10 days.

Parental involvement

The school will build respectful relationships with parents and families to ensure their trust and engagement. Open and honest communication will be maintained about the expectations of school life, attendance and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them. The school will liaise with other agencies working with students and their families to support attendance, e.g. social services.

Parents will be expected to:

- Treat staff with respect.
- Actively support the work of the school.
- Call staff for help when they need it.
- Communicate with the school about possible circumstances which may affect their child's attendance or require support.

Attendance register

Attendance registers are taken morning and afternoon. This register will record whether students are:

- Present.
- Absent.
- Attending an approved educational visit.
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

The school will use the national attendance codes to ensure attendance and absence are monitored and recorded in a consistent way. The following codes will be used:

- / = Present in the morning
- \ = Present in the afternoon
- L = Late arrival before the register has closed
- C = Authorised absence
- E = Excluded but no alternative provision made
- I = Illness
- M = Medical or dental appointments
- R = Religious observance
- B = Off-site education activity
- G = Unauthorised holiday
- O = Unauthorised absence
- U = Arrived after registration closed

- N = Reason not yet provided
- X = Not required to be in school
- T = Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence
- V = Educational visit or trip
- P = Participating in a supervised sporting activity
- D = Dual registered – at another educational establishment
- Y = Exceptional circumstances
- Z = Student not on admission register

When the school has planned in advance to be fully or partially closed, the code '#' will be used for the relevant students who are absent. This code will also be used to record year groups who are not due to attend because the school has set different term dates for different years, e.g. induction days.

All amendments made to the attendance register will include the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date of amendment and the name and role of the person who made the amendment.

Every entry received into the attendance register will be preserved for three years.

School Family Liaison Officer

Where targeted support is needed, the FLO will work with the family to record the barriers, agreed actions, responsible persons, reasonable adjustments, referrals and review dates. Plans should be proportionate, accessible and focused on improving the pupil's access to education.

Where a family is already working with other services, the school will seek to align attendance support with existing plans rather than duplicate them. Where voluntary support is appropriate, the school will seek meaningful engagement and will keep evidence of support offered and the family's response.

Lateness

The school will regard punctuality as of the utmost importance and lateness will not be tolerated.

The school day starts at **8:50 am**. Students should be in their classroom at this time. Registers are taken as follows throughout the school day:

- Registers are marked by **9:05 am**. Students will receive a late mark (L) if they are not in their classroom by this time.
- Registers are closed at **09:15 am** Students will receive an arrived after registered closed mark (U) after that time.

- After lunch, registers are marked by **1:30 pm**. Students will receive a mark of absence if they are not present.

The school will require parents to observe the school holidays as prescribed; therefore, the headteacher will be unable to authorise holidays during term-time in most cases. The headteacher will be only allowed to grant a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. Applications will be made in advance and the headteacher will be satisfied by the evidence which is presented, before authorising term-time leave. The headteacher will determine the amount of time a student can be away from school during term-time. Any leave of absence is at the discretion of the headteacher. Any requests for leave during term-time will be considered on an individual basis and the student's previous attendance record will be taken into account.

Requests for leave will not be granted in the following circumstances:

- When a student's attendance record shows any unauthorised absence
- Where a student's authorised absence record is already above 10 percent for any reason

If parents take their child out of school during term-time without authorisation from the headteacher, they may be subject to sanctions such as penalty fines.

Leave during lunch times

Parents may be permitted to take their child away from the school premises during lunch times with permission from the headteacher – it is at the headteacher's discretion as to whether a student will be allowed to leave the premises.

Parents will submit a written request, outlining the reasons for their child to leave the premises during lunch time – this request will be submitted to the headteacher. The headteacher will consider the request and will invite the parent into the school for a discussion regarding any concerns, as well as the timely return of their child at the end of lunch time. The headteacher reserves the right to grant or refuse a request and will inform the parent in writing of their decision within one week of the request.

The headteacher reserves the right to withdraw their permission at any time – this may occur, for example, where there are attendance concerns. Any decision to withdraw permission will be in writing, explaining the reasons for the headteacher's decision. If permission is withdrawn, parents will not be entitled to appeal the decision. Parents will be able to withdraw their request at any time – the request will be submitted in writing to the headteacher.

Missing children

The following procedures will be taken in the event of a student going missing whilst at school:

- The member of staff who has noticed the missing student will inform the headteacher immediately.
- The office staff will also be informed as they will act as a point of contact for receiving information regarding the search.
- A member of staff will stay with the rest of the class, and all other available members of staff will conduct a thorough search of the school premises as directed by the headteacher.
- The following areas will be systematically searched:
    - All classrooms
    - All toilets
    - Hall
    - The library
    - Quiet rooms
    - Soft Play Space
    - Sensory Pod
    - Any outbuildings
    - The school grounds
- Available staff will begin a search of the area immediately outside of the school premises, and will take a mobile phone with them so they can be contacted.
- If the student has not been found after 10 minutes, then the parents of the student will be notified.
- The school will attempt to contact parents using the emergency contact numbers provided.
- If the emergency contacts list has been exhausted, the police will be contacted.
- The missing student's teacher will fill in an incident form, describing all circumstances leading up to the student going missing.
- If the missing student has an allocated social worker, is a looked-after child then the appropriate personnel will be informed.
- When the student has been located, members of staff will care for and talk to the student to ensure they are safe and well.
- Parents and any other agencies will be informed immediately when the student has been located.

The headteacher will carry out a full investigation and will draw a conclusion as to how the incident occurred. A written report will be produced, and policies and procedures will be reviewed in accordance with the outcome where necessary.

Religious observances

The school will take advice from local religious leaders of all faiths to establish the appropriate number of days of absence required for religious festivals. Parents will be required to inform the school in advance if absences are required for days of religious observance.

Appointments

As far as possible, parents will be encouraged to book medical and dental appointments outside of school hours. Where this is not possible, a note and an appointment card, email or screenshot of the appointment will be sent to the school office using Tapestry, phone, or in person.

If the appointment requires the student to leave during the school day, they will be signed out at the school office by a parent. Students will be expected to attend school before and after the appointment wherever possible.

Modelling, sport and acting performances/activities

The school will ensure that all students engaging in performances/activities (whether they, or another person, receives payment or not), which require them to be absent from school, understand that they will be required to obtain a licence from the LA which authorises the school's absence(s).

Additional arrangements will be made by the school for students engaging in performances or activities that require them to be absent from school to ensure they do not fall behind in their education – this may involve private teaching. These arrangements will be approved by the LA who will ensure that the arrangements are suitable for the student.

The student will receive education that, when taken together over the term of the licence, amounts to a minimum of three hours per day that the student would be required to attend a school maintained by the LA issuing the licence. This requirement will be met by ensuring a student receives an education:

- For not less than six hours a week; and
- During each complete period of four weeks (or if there is a period of less than four weeks, then during that period), for periods of time not less than three hours a day; and

- On days where the student would be required to attend school if they were attending a school maintained by the LA; and
- For not more than five hours on any such day.

Where a licence has been granted by the LA and it specifies dates of absence, no further authorisation will be needed from the school. Where an application does not specify dates, and it has been approved by the LA, it is at the discretion of the headteacher to authorise the leave of absence for each day. The headteacher will not authorise any absences which would mean that a student's attendance would fall below 96 percent. Where a licence has not been obtained, the headteacher will not authorise any absence for a performance or activity.

Young carers

The school understands the difficulties that face young carers and will endeavour to identify young carers at the earliest opportunity, as well as through their time at the school. A caring and flexible approach will be taken to the needs of young carers and each student will be examined on a case-by-case basis, involving other agencies if appropriate.

The school, in conjunction with relevant authorities, will implement support for students who are young carers, to encourage their sustained and regular attendance at school in line with the school's expectations.

Monitoring and review

This policy reflect the statutory requirements of Working Together to Improve School Attendance July 2026. Governors and leaders are required to ensure the school publishes its attendance arrangements, thresholds for escalation, and responsible officers on the school website.

Attendance and punctuality will be monitored throughout the year. The school's attendance target is 95 percent excluding medical absences.

This policy will be reviewed regularly by the headteacher.

Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.

Attendance Monitoring Procedures (in line with current statutory guidance September 2026):

Woodlands School has adopted the following attendance monitoring procedures, to ensure that students' attendance meets the expected standard, and effective intervention is provided where students' attendance falls below the standard:

1. The FLO has access to attendance data daily
2. Any attendance/punctuality trends noticed by classroom teachers are passed immediately to the SLT / FLO.
3. Where no contact has been received from a parent/carer to explain a pupil's absence, the school will make reasonable attempts to establish the reason for the absence. If no contact has been established by the third day of absence, the Family Liaison Officer (FLO) will undertake a home visit to establish the pupil's welfare and the reason for their continued absence. Where there are safeguarding concerns, action, including a home visit or referral to relevant agencies, may be taken sooner.
4. Contact is made with parents on the first day of absence for any student absence not reported. 'N' codes are used to indicate that the student is absent for a reason not yet provided; these N codes are reported to the SLT and attendance officer daily.

   Any N codes not established after a week are recorded as an unauthorised absence.
5. If a student's attendance falls to 95% percent, the Family Liaison Officer adds them to the monitoring lists.
6. If a student's attendance falls below 95% a letter is sent home explaining that the student's attendance is now being monitored. If attendance falls below 90% the Family Liaison Officer contacts the parents to discuss this.
7. The student's attendance is monitored and, if attendance does not improve after this time, parents are required to attend a meeting in school with the classroom teacher and/or the Family Liaison Officer. If parents are unwilling to cooperate, or are genuinely unable to attend, the FLO will visit the home.