

September 2024

*Next Review date: September 2025*

# Attendance Policy

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This policy applies to Wootton Upper School, managed by Wootton Academy Trust (WAT).



**Wootton  
Upper School**

**Person responsible:** Head of School

**Reviewed by:** WUS Local Governing Board

# 1. Aims.

At Wootton Upper School we are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school
- We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

# 2. Legislation and guidance.

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE) – published May 2022, 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 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

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 Local Governing Board [LGB]

The LGB is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school’s policies and ethos
- Setting attendance targets for the school on an annual basis
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the Head of School to account for the implementation of this policy
- Appointing a link governor for attendance

## 3.2 The Head of School

The Head of School is responsible for:

- Ensuring the School Attendance Policy is implemented at the school
- Ensuring that pupils’ attendance is recorded accurately each morning and afternoon
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors on a termly basis Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Ensuring that fixed-penalty notices, where necessary, are issued in line with the policy, authorising

fixed-penalty requests put forward by the school's Educational Welfare and Attendance Officer

### **3.3 The Deputy Head of School**

The Deputy Head of School is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school fulfilling the role of Designated Senior Leader for Attendance
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement to ensure that the LGBs Attendance target is met
- Ensuring that data on attendance is available to the Head of School, the Executive Principal, the LGB and MAT Board.
- Monitoring and evaluating the impact of processes and strategies to improve attendance. Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Ensuring that Pastoral Support Officers, Year Leaders and members of the Attendance Team meetings with parents/carers and pupils to discuss attendance issues and agree targets for improvement.
- Overseeing targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

### **3.4 Educational Welfare and Attendance Officer**

The Educational Welfare and Attendance Officer is responsible for:

- The AWAO is responsible for:
- 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 designated senior leader responsible for attendance, the Head of School, the LGB and others as required.
- Working with Local Authority education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence Advising the Head of School when to approve fixed-penalty notices

### **3.5 Form Tutors and classroom Teachers**

Form Tutors and Classroom Teachers are responsible for:

- recording attendance using SIMS on a lesson by lesson basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information in a timely manner
- promoting good attendance meeting with individual pupils whose attendance falls below the school target [FT only]

### **3.6 Attendance Office staff**

School attendance office staff will:

- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it in SIMS
- Work with parents/carers and pupils to improve attendance where it is below agreed target levels
- Refer parents/carers to the EWO to provide more detailed support and challenge on attendance

### **3.7 Parents/ Carers**

Parents/ Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring their child/children attends/attend school each day unless they are medically unfit or the child's absence has been approved in advance by the Head of School using the Leave of Absence Request Form
- Ensuring that their children arrive punctually to school at the start of the school day.
- Telephoning or emailing the Attendance Team to report their child's absence before 8.30 am on each day of absence and advise when they are expected to return
- Providing the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensuring that, where possible, medical appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

### **3.8 Pupils**

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day, unless they are unwell and their parents/carers have reported their absence to the Attendance Team
- Attend all lessons punctually

## 4. Recording attendance.

### 4.1 Attendance register.

We will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register. We will call our attendance every morning and afternoon in line with DfE requirements We will ensure that the register provides an accurate record of attendance. 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

**See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.**

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 8.25am on each school day (the school gates close at 8.25am). The register for the first session (am) will be taken by 08.40 and will be kept open until 09.00. The register for the second session (pm) will be taken at 14.00 and will be kept open until 14.10. As well as completing the official AM and PM registration of pupils, we will, additionally record pupil attendance at each lesson.

### 4.2 Unplanned absence.

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason (unwell will not be accepted for an authorised absence) for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8.30am or as soon as practically possible by emailing or calling the school (see also section 7).

We will mark absence due to illness (including mental ill health) as authorised unless the school has genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. Many children will experience normal but difficult emotions that make them nervous about attending school, such as worries about friendships, schoolwork, examinations, or variable moods". But it is "important to note that these pupils are still expected to attend school regularly". Doing so "may serve to help with the underlying issue".

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness,

the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

### 4.3 Planned absence.

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. The form to request Leave of Absence from school can be found on the school website or be obtained by requesting a copy by email from [attendance@wootton.beds.sch.uk](mailto:attendance@wootton.beds.sch.uk)

However, we expect 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/carer 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:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the L code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the U code. This will be counted as one session of unauthorized absence as per government guidelines.

### 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:

- Contact, via text message, the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason.
- 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

### 4.6 Reporting to Parents/ Carers.

The school will inform all parents/carers about their child's attendance and absence levels via grade sheets.

## 5. Authorised and unauthorised absence.

### 5.1 Approval for term-time absence.

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

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account 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 four weeks before the

absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school website. The Head of School is likely to require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

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 – 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, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
- Exceptional family circumstances e.g. bereavement, attendance at a funeral, respite care of a looked after child or a housing crisis which prevents attendance, family crisis such as marriage break-up
- Where it is company/organisational policy for an employee to take leave at a specified time in the year and there is no opportunity for a family holiday in school holidays. This must be supported by documentation from the organisation.
- Service personnel returning from/scheduled to embark upon a tour of duty abroad.
- Farming families, whose work patterns mean they cannot holiday during the summer holiday months
- Where a holiday is recommended as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issues. Evidence must be provided from a qualified professional such as a doctor.
- Taking holidays in school time is not acceptable and the following reasons are not considered to be exceptional circumstances:
  - Availability of cheaper holidays
  - Availability of desired accommodation
  - Poor weather experienced in school holiday periods
  - Periods overlapping with the beginning or end of term

From September 2024, a leave of absence (LOA) will not be granted for pupils to take part in protest activity during school hours.

## 5.2 Legal sanctions.

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. We would always prefer to work with families to ensure this measure is very much an action of "last resort".

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £80 within 21 days or £160 if not paid within 21 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority. Penalty notices can be issued by a Head of School, local authority officer or the police. The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- 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 a pupil who is subject to a fixed-term suspension is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason
- If the payment has not been made after 21 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

## 5.3 National Fine thresholds.

Schools will have to consider a fine if a pupil misses 10 sessions (half days) of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. They should “not have a blanket position of issuing or not issuing penalty notices”.

The threshold can be met with “any combination of unauthorised absence”. For example, four sessions in term time plus six instances of arriving late.

The period of 10 weeks can also span “different terms or school years”.

But councils “retain the discretion to issue one before the threshold is met”. This could include where parents “are deliberately avoiding the national threshold by taking several term time holidays below threshold, or for repeated absence for birthdays or other family events”.

## 6. Strategies for promoting attendance.

To help promote attendance incentives may include the following:

- 100% attendance certificates.
- Bonus points towards school reward shop
- Year group non-uniform days
- End of year prize reward
- Free pizza or similar lunch

## 7. Attendance monitoring.

Stage	Responsibility	Actions
<b>Stage 1</b> Attendance falls below 96%	Attendance office to share fortnightly attendance figures with HOYs and Tutors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tutor to have a discussion with pupil</li> <li>• Tutor to log discussion has taken place on Class Charts</li> </ul>
<b>Stage 2</b> Attendance remains between 95%-92%	Attendance Officer to meet with pupil to discuss any issues and set targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Stage 2</b> letter sent home</li> </ul>
<b>Stage 3a (PA risk)</b> Attendance below 92%	WUS EWO/Attendance Officer to meet with pupil and parent/carer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Stage 3a</b> sent home</li> <li>• Pupil/Parent contract agreed</li> </ul>
<b>Stage 3b (PA)</b> Attendance -remains below 92%	WUS EWO/Attendance Officer to meet with pupil and parent/carer to review progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Stage 3b</b> letter sent home.</li> <li>• Pupil/Parent contract agreed</li> </ul>
<b>Stage 4 (PA) 90% or below</b>	WUS EWO/Attendance Officer to engage services of LA EWO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Stage 4</b> letter sent home 2 week no improvement - Referral made to local authority</li> </ul>

### 7.1 Monitoring attendance.

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern.

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics.

The school will compare attendance data to the national average and report the comparison to the Local Governing Board. Schools must share daily attendance data with government from September 2024.

## 7.2 Analysing attendance.

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

## 7.3 Using data to improve attendance.

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to Form Tutors, and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

## 7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence.

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

## 8. Monitoring arrangements.

This policy will be reviewed annually incorporating new DfE statutory and non-statutory guidance

The Deputy Head of School and EWAO are responsible for reviewing the policy, involving all stakeholders and then presenting it to the LGB for approval.

## 9. Links with other policies.

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy



# Appendix 1: Attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
<b>Authorised absence</b>		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances.
C1	Authorised leave of absence	Absence for a regulated performance or employment abroad
C2	Authorised leave of absence	Pupils on part-time timetables.
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made

H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y1	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	Absence due to transport normally being provided not available
Y2	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	"Widespread disruption to travel"
Y3	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	For when part of a school is closed
Y4	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	Unexpected whole school closure (different from code # for planned closures)
Y5	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	For pupils in the criminal justice system
Y6	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	Absence due to public health guidance or law
Y7	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	"Any other unavoidable cause"
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed