



**WOOLGROVE SCHOOL,
SPECIAL NEEDS ACADEMY**

School Attendance Policy



**'Equal opportunities lie at the heart of all that we do at Woolgrove.
We are committed to ensuring that every member of the school community,
whatever their position, race, gender, disability or religion is given the
same chance as any other to access the services
and support of the school'**

Lisa Hall

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Mission statement

Woolgrove School aims to maximise attendance rates in order to ensure that all pupils are able to take fullest advantage of the learning experiences available to them.

Statutory Framework

Under Section 1999 of the 1993 Education Act, a pupil is required to attend regularly at the school where he/she is a registered pupil.

The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. Only if the school is satisfied to the validity of the explanation offered by the letter/message will the absence be authorised (see below).

Rights and Responsibilities

To maintain high levels of attendance is the responsibility of everyone in the school community - pupils, parents and all staff.

Pupils

All pupils are expected to attend school and all their lessons regularly and punctually. Pupils who do experience attendance difficulties will be offered prompt and sympathetic support from the Headteacher.

Parents/Carers

Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly, punctually and properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn. If a child is prevented for any reason from attending, or is late, parents/carers are requested to telephone the office by 9.30am to notify the school. A pupil's absence from school must be considered as unauthorised until a satisfactory explanation is forthcoming from the parent.

Parents will be promptly informed of any concerns which may arise over a child's attendance. Parents should avoid, if at all possible, making medical/dental appointments during school hours.

School

Staff will endeavour to encourage good attendance and punctuality through personal example. Attendance is the responsibility of all staff (not just teaching staff). The school will employ a range of strategies (see below) to encourage good attendance and punctuality and will promptly investigate all absenteeism, liaising closely with parents. Staff will respond to all absenteeism firmly and consistently.

Registration

Registers are called at 9.10 am (whole school), 1.00 pm (infants) and 1.15pm (juniors) and will be marked in black or red in accordance with the list of symbols as set out in the register front sheet.

Registers will close at 9.30 am and 1.30pm. If a pupil fails to arrive before registers close, he/she will be marked as 'absent'. Pupils who arrive after the registers have closed, should be signed into the School Late Book in the main office. (The class teacher will subsequently

amend the register entry to read 'absent/late). If a pupil is consistently late the Headteacher will contact the parents.

Parents are reminded that if a child arrives in school after the registers have closed and an acceptable explanation is not forthcoming, the pupil has to be recorded as 'unauthorised absence' for that session.

Class teachers will take registers in each class and notify the office of any absentees as soon as possible (by 9.30am).

The Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team will inspect attendance reports from SIMS weekly and the registers each half term in order to ensure that correct procedures are being followed, totals being calculated and entered etc.

Authorised/Unauthorised absence

It is vital that all staff adhere to the same criteria when deciding whether or not to authorise an absence. Woolgrove School will decide on how an absence is to be recorded according to 'School Attendance: Policy and Practice Categorisation of Absence' (DFE 1994) and this states that:

Absence can be authorised if:

- The pupil was absent with leave (defined as 'leave granted by the Headteacher who was authorised to do so by the Governing Body')
- The pupil was ill 'or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause'.
- The absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs.
- The school at which the child is a registered pupil is not within walking distance of the child's home, and no suitable arrangements have been made by the LEA for any of the following: The child's transport to and from school; or enabling the child to become a registered pupil at a school nearer his/her home.
- The pupil is the child of Traveller parents and the conditions as stated in paragraph 47 of the guidance are met.
- There is a close family bereavement.
- The pupil is attending a transition day or event in connection with an application for a place at another school.
- The pupil is attending an approved off-site activity or is receiving special off-site tuition.
- The pupil is participating in an approved public performance.
- The pupil is involved in an exceptional special occasion i.e. if the pupil is attending the wedding of a parent.

Absence should be **unauthorised** if:

- No explanation is forthcoming.
- The school is dissatisfied with the explanation.
- The pupil is shopping in school hours.
- The pupil is absent for unexceptional special occasions i.e. a birthday.
- The pupil is away from school for a period of time longer than that negotiated with the school.

- The pupil is on a family holiday without permission or if the parents have failed to apply for permission in advance of the holiday and instead seek retrospective approval on their return.

Holidays

Holidays taken during term-time impact on a child's education in the following ways:

- Learning in primary schools provides the building blocks on which their future education is based and these building blocks may not be taught again the same way.
- By taking a holiday in term-time parents and carers are giving children the message that it is acceptable to miss school for reasons other than genuine illness.
- Full school attendance encourages children to develop positive patterns of attendance, which will support them throughout their school career and beyond.

Parents do not have the right to take their child out of school during term time for holidays for any reason. In order to request term-time leave parents must first apply to the school in writing well in advance and they may be invited to attend a short face-to-face meeting or speak by telephone with the Headteacher. Following this meeting the School may grant leave in term-time if it is considered that there are *exceptional* circumstances. This is at the discretion of the Headteacher and the child's prior attendance and individual circumstances will be taken into account.

Procedures for Following up Absence

- If a pupil is ill parents/carers must notify the school by 9.30am on the first day of absence. They need to inform the school when the child will be returning to school. If a pupil is absent without an explanation being forthcoming the school will contact the parents on the first day of absence. If the absentee is a pupil about whom there are already concerns, the school will make every effort to contact the parents immediately.
- If a pupil is persistently (or intermittently) absent, the Headteacher will contact the parents and invite them to attend a meeting at school.
- If a pupil returns to School after a period of absence and no explanation is offered then the school will contact the parents.
- If the pupil is persistently absent (or late) and the School's efforts to effect an improvement have been unsuccessful, the situation will be referred to the Attendance Officer.

Strategies for Promoting Attendance

- Woolgrove School will offer an environment in which pupils feel valued and welcomed. The School's ethos must demonstrate that pupils feel that their presence is important, that they will be missed when they are absent/late and that follow up action will be taken.
- A varied and flexible curriculum will be offered to all pupils. Every effort will be made to ensure that learning tasks are matched to pupils' needs.
- Attendance data will be regularly collected and analysed in order to help identify patterns, set targets, correlate attendance with achievement, and support and inform policy/practice.
- Pupils whose attendance is a cause for concern will be set targets for improvement. The class teacher will monitor and review these targets.

- Parents will be reminded of the importance of good attendance.
- Pupils who are absent through sickness for any extended period of time will (when appropriate) have work sent home to them and will be re-integrated back into School upon their return.
- Pupils who have been absent for whatever reason for an extended period of time will (when appropriate) have individually-tailored reintegration programmes prepared for them.
- The Headteacher will make a termly report to the School's Governing Body on attendance matters.
- The Headteacher and class teachers will, when appropriate, liaise with other agencies - Educational Psychology Service, social Services, Child and Family Guidance etc. - when this may serve to support and assist pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties.
- The Headteacher has regular meetings and/or communication with the Attendance Officer in order to identify and support those pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties