



# WOODFORD GREEN PRIMARY SCHOOL

## *ATTENDANCE POLICY 2017*

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## 1 Introduction

The key principles, which underpin the school's procedures for managing attendance, are that regular and punctual attendance is key to the academic and social development. This will improve the life chances of children and young people; children and young people who attend school regularly and punctually are less likely to be at risk, both in terms of engaging in anti-social behaviour and in terms of their own health and safety and welfare.

The aim of this policy is to support the school to build on our capacity to improve regular school attendance and attendance practises within our school.

The underpinning principles are to:

- challenge / interrogate our own data to identify patterns and vulnerable groups / pupils
- embed good attendance practise within WGPS, at all levels, involving all stakeholders and Governors
- work with individual pupils and their families to assess and respond to their educational needs and to ensure that young people do not remain disenfranchised from the educational system;
- engage with other agencies, both statutory and voluntary, to ensure that the welfare and protection of all young people remains paramount;
- ensure that all young people have access to educational provision suitable to age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs that they may have;
- respond to the educational needs of vulnerable groups and ensure that the safeguarding of all pupils remains at the forefront of all considerations;
- use resources provided to support pupil attendance.

These attendance procedures set out the requirements for schools and other educational settings for the management of pupil attendance and absence. They reflect statutory requirements and the most recent guidance from the DFE.

Regular school attendance is crucial if a child is to achieve their full potential. It is important for a child to attend school regularly. If they are not in school, they are unlikely to be learning and gaining the maximum benefit from their education. Research shows that raising pupil attendance in schools will contribute to raising achievement.

We expect all our children to attend school, on time every day, unless the reason for absence is unavoidable.

School aims to have 96%+ child attendance each term.

Individual child attendance targets are known and shared with children, staff and parents.

Children with known irregular school attendance prior to starting at WGPS have this issue discussed

with them and their parents when they are first invited to visit the school.

## **2 Responsibility for Good Attendance**

### **Parents, Guardians and Pupils**

Parents and guardians of children of compulsory school age are legally required to ensure that they receive a full-time education. Parents and guardians are also responsible for informing the school of any absence as soon as possible, which should be on the first day of the absence. This can be done by telephoning the school, emailing the attendance officer, by personal contact to the school office or by note or letter. They should state the reason for absence and when the child is expected to return to school. Pupils are expected to attend school regularly and to arrive at school punctually. Persistent lateness can be seen as absence and is managed in the same way as poor attendance. Parents and guardians should ensure that children arrive at school prepared to take part in the school day.

It is parents/carers legal responsibility to ensure that their children receive efficient full time education. This extends beyond ensuring regular and punctual attendance and requires that the child is in a fit state to learn. It is the Head Teacher and governors, not the parents, who can determine what constitutes authorised absence. A parent may submit a note or other notification in relation to a particular absence but this does not oblige the school to accept it as a valid reason for absence. If doubt remains, the absence will be treated as unauthorised. Where parentally condoned unjustified absence appears to be a problem in relation to a particular pupil the Borough may be notified.

The school may authorise absences for appointments during the school day, retrospectively where it is satisfied as to the explanation offered but is required to treat absences of pupils of compulsory school age without valid reason or for which no explanation has been provided as unauthorised.

In addition, excessive amounts of authorised absence are recognised as seriously disrupting the continuity of learning and encouraging disaffection at a later stage. Any patterns for individual pupils or families emerging during monitoring will be investigated.

The school will generally do everything it can to encourage good attendance, but the prime responsibility remains with the parent/carer.

### **First day of absence calling**

At WGPS, we expect all parents and guardians to ensure that they advise the school on the first day of absence. In the instances that parents and guardians fail to do so, we will attempt to contact the parent or guardian by telephone. If contact cannot be made, we will text/email the parent or guardian, requesting them to contact us as soon as possible. If contact is not made, we will write to the parent or guardian reminding them of their responsibility to inform the school and a reason for the absence. In some cases the school will contact the BACME or MASH teams.

Promoting good attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community at WGPS.

WGPS has a duty to publish its absence figures to parents and guardians to promote attendance. Equally, parents and guardians have a duty to make sure that their children attend school regularly.

Staff and governors are committed to working with parents and guardians to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent and guardian.

If a child is absent, the absence is categorised by the school as either authorised or unauthorised. Only the school can authorise an absence, not the parents or guardian.

### Child School Council

To ensure that children at WGPS contribute and understand the importance of regular school attendance, the children's student council will also review this policy.

Children at WGPS are very aware of the link between good attendance and achieving. They appreciate the staff incentives for good, improved attendance and punctuality. Rewards are given and certificates for good attendance.

### Governors

The governing body of WGPS have a responsibility for attendance. This is delegated on a daily basis through the Head Teacher to the Senior Leadership Team. Governors regularly monitor the effectiveness of attendance policy and practice.

### School Attendance Leader

The designated Attendance Lead, PJ Prince, is responsible for absence at WGPS.

Throughout each term, children with punctuality and attendance problems (at risk children) are identified. Investigations are made to understand the nature of the problems, identifying how the school can support parents in meeting their legal responsibility. The School Attendance Lead then liaises with the BACME officer and parent/carers in the first instance. External agencies including, EP (Educational Psychologists), Social Care and Early Help are consulted if the situation is not resolved

### Attendance Thresholds

Thresholds	The following are suggested actions at each threshold:
100%>	Reward regular attendance
<95%	<p>Pupils with attendance at, or below, 95%</p> <p>For each absence, a designated member of staff makes a telephone call to the family home as early in the day as possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unless a satisfactory explanation has been received, a letter is sent to the parent regretting the absence and asking for an explanation for every session missed.</li> <li>• Send a standard letter to parent pointing out the deterioration in attendance levels.</li> <li>• Remind the parent of the school's target levels for attendance and the negative effect of irregular attendance on learning. Require the parent to provide an explanation and comments.</li> <li>• Keep in contact with parents on a weekly basis. Provide encouragement where improvement has been made.</li> <li>• Discuss the likelihood of referral to the BACME Service unless improvement is made.</li> </ul>

<b>&lt;90% (PA)</b>	<p>Pupils deteriorating to 90% Make first day calls as above.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is referred to as Persistent Absence to the BACME Officer.</li> <li>• Maintain the approaches set out at the previous thresholds. The Head teacher or Attendance Lead should be involved and should add weight to any interventions already in place.</li> <li>• Ask parents to attend a school based meeting with Attendance Lead and chaired by the BACME Officer, Use the meeting to investigate why pupil has not attended regularly.</li> <li>• Discuss detrimental effect on learning.</li> <li>• Reach agreements for rapid improvements over the next half term.</li> <li>• Remind the parent that full attendance is the aim and that anything less than 96% will cause concern.</li> <li>• Consider using a parenting contract between school and parent.</li> </ul> <p>Monitor attendance very closely and keep in regular contact with the parent, either to praise attendance levels or to show ongoing concern.</p>
<b>&lt;85%</b>	<p>Pupils deteriorating to 85%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If pupil has not been referred to the BACME Officer this should be done (if this has not already taken place) and meeting to create a plan of action.</li> </ul>

### 3 Authorised Absence

This is defined as:

- When a child is absent as a result of illness and an acceptable explanation has been received
- Where a child has had a fixed term exclusion from school
- Medical/dental appointments (sight of appointment card should be requested).  
Appointments should be made outside of school hours wherever possible and the minimum amount of time should be taken.
- Exceptional circumstances (as defined in the exemptions list; available to all parents)

### 4 Unauthorised Absence

An unauthorised absence is where the school does not consider the absence to be reasonable or where no reason has been given.

If a child is not present at the start of the day and the school has not been notified of this beforehand the office reception staff will telephone the child's home immediately to ascertain the reason for absence.

If an absence is not due to sickness or some other circumstance (i.e. it is unauthorised) then a referral can be made to the School's Education Welfare Officer. When unauthorised absences persistent the Education Welfare Officer will contact the parents.

All absence by children on Social Services Child Protection Register/Cause for concern list will be counted as Unauthorised and referred to the DSL who will take necessary action.

Prolonged absence (more than 5 days) for medical reasons will require medical evidence (in addition to parental notes). This can be a medical certificate or a copy of the prescription. Over the counter medicines will not be sufficient proof.

Where attendance has fallen to 90% and below the Headteacher can request that medical proof is provided so that the absence can be authorised. Parents will meet with the Headteacher beforehand to discuss this. Failure to provide medical proof will result in the absence being unauthorised.

The criteria that the school will apply to determine 'exceptional' is a circumstance that has unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child, which outweighs the loss of teaching time. This interpretation will have different parameters from one case to another, each individual request will be considered on its merits.

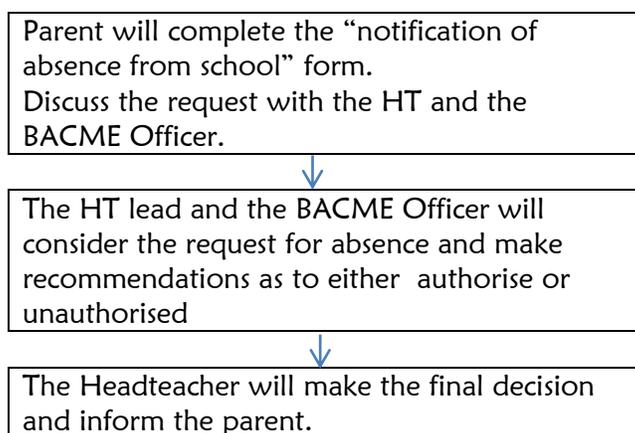
Parents will meet with the Headteacher and the BACME Officer to discuss the request and a decision will be given if the leave of absence is to be authorised. In line with Pupil Regulations the Head's decision is final.

No authorisation for leave of absence can be given retrospectively, which means that permission must always be sought beforehand.

In the event that there is an absence after a school holiday, the school will need to see proof, in the terms of a medical certificate or flight delay. The school will decide if the absence will be authorised or unauthorised.

In the event that leave for exceptional absence is granted, any further days of absence will be regarded as unauthorised. The school must be informed in all instances and where the cause is sickness, a doctor's certificate must be produced. Failure to advise the school may result in their name being removed from the school roll and the Local Authority will be informed.

Request for absence during term-time process



### Publications of Attendance Data

DfE data returns will be produced from the relevant database in accordance with advice issued by the DfE and the London Borough of Waltham Forest.

## 5 Sanctions for an Unauthorised Absence without Permission

If a child's attendance falls below 95% in any term without good reason, a parent can receive a Penalty Notice or prosecution under the Education Act 1996 Section 444 or the Headteacher has not authorised the absence request as detailed above:

- **Fixed Penalty Notices**

Under Section 23 of the Anti-Social behaviour Act 2003, Local Authorities are required to issue penalty Notices to the parent/carer of a child who has irregular attendance, where the absence is unauthorized by the school.

A Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued for unauthorised leave of absence by the Education Welfare Officer following discussions with the Headteacher or Attendance Lead.

This will incur a fine of £60 per child being imposed, if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice. This will rise to £120 child if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt.

- **Court Proceedings**

If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 28 days, the Local Authority may prosecute and the parent and guardian may receive a criminal record. This prosecution is for the offence of failing to secure attendance at school. Prosecutions are brought under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

The Education Welfare Officer can also make an application to the Local Magistrates Court to action court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2,500 and/or 3 months imprisonment.

## 6 Registers

Registers are to be completed each day by the class teacher.

Registration periods at the start of morning and afternoon sessions will be between the times of 8.55– 9:20, 1:15 – 1:20. Registers should be completed promptly between these times and returned to the office.

Any pupil arriving after 9:00am, 1:15am will need report to the office. If a child arrives after 9:00am until the register closes at 9:20am he or she will be marked late (L) in the Register. If a child arrives after the register closes at 9:20am he or she will be marked as an authorised absence (U) in the Register.

All messages received regarding absence will be recorded, verbal and telephone messages are acceptable. The messages will be recorded and passed to class teacher. Any letters or notes received by the teacher will be placed in the register folder. In addition, any verbal messages given to them will be recorded in a sheet in the register folder so that any reasons for absence can be entered on the system. These will be kept for a minimum of a term. Where a child is sent home ill by authorisation of the office staff/class teacher this will be recorded as "I" and noted in the register.

The office reception staff will contact parents and carers from 9.15am each morning if their son or daughter has not arrived at School.

## **7 Rewarding Good Attendance and punctuality**

Each week class attendance will be announced in assembly and the class with the highest attendance will receive an attendance cup.

Each term certificates will be awarded to those children achieving 100% attendance and punctuality.

### **Punctuality**

Good punctuality is essential for children in order to achieve high attainment and improved behaviour.

#### **Office Staff will:**

- Keep accurate records of lateness.
- Contact parents and carers regarding lateness.
- Stress how much we care about child being punctual for school each day.
- Talk to child about difficulties they may be having, which may affect their punctuality.

### **Continued Poor Punctuality**

- Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher and Attendance Lead to be informed of children whose lateness is causing concern
- Parents and guardians to be invited into school to discuss the issue
- The situation should be discussed with the BACME Officer
- Where necessary the BACME Officer may issue a Notification of Parental Responsibility and or may make an application for court proceedings.

### **BACME Service, Traded Service Offer at School**

The BACME Service provides a traded service to WGPS, who are supported by an experienced allocated BACME Officer

**Objectives** - The BACME Service does this in the following ways:

- Contribute to the educational opportunities for all young people at WGPS who are of statutory school age are maximised by means of regular school attendance;
- Support schools operationally (by receiving individual referrals) and strategically (by using and evaluating data to target resources, to advise on legislation and regulations etc.);

- Work with other statutory agencies (for example, Early Help, Youth Offending Service, Police, Social Care, Housing) to ensure the welfare of all children and young people at School.
- Work with Schools to continually develop whole school approaches to improve attendance through policy development, review of systems and developing improvement plans.
- Work with other service providers to provide co-ordinated support to WGFS, children and young people to disseminate good practice; and
- Work with parent and guardians, children and young people, employing a casework approach, to improve attendance through early intervention and utilising a continuum of support.

**First Day Calling:** A designated member of staff makes a telephone call to the family home/contact as early in the day as possible for each unexplained absence. This will happen regardless if a referral has or has not been made to the BACME Officer. If the call is not answered, the Attendance Lead will text and email the parent, requesting a response.

**First Attendance Letter from School/Provision:**

- To parent informing of the deterioration in attendance levels.
- Remind parent school's target levels for attendance and the negative effect of irregular attendance on learning.
- Require the parent to provide an explanation and comments.
- Discuss the likelihood of referral to the Education Welfare Service unless improvement is made.

**Second Attendance Letter from School/Provision:**

This letter should be sent by the Headteacher or Attendance Lead

- Invite parents to attend a school based meeting with Attendance Lead and the Education Welfare Officer.
- Inform parent that if there is not an improvement a referral will be made to the BACME Officer.

**The Attendance Lead at the School/Provision:**

- Makes a referral to the BACME Officer who will issue a Notification of Parental Responsibility Letter.
- The BACME Officer will make contact with the parent (this may be by phone, letter or home visit)

**The BACME Officer:**

- Will send an invitation to the parent and other professionals to attend a School Attendance Panel Meeting.
- The BACME Officer will prepare a written report for the School Attendance Panel Meeting

**School Attendance Panel Meeting:**

- A Senior Officer from the BACME Service will chair the School Attendance Panel Meeting and send the written recommendations to the parent.

**School Attendance Panel Meeting Recommendations:**

- The School Attendance Lead and BACME Officer will monitor and review the attendance in line with the recommendations. If there has not been a significant improvement the matter will proceed to court as below:
- If the matter has been referred to the local Magistrates Court for their consideration without a monitoring period the BACME Officer will make an application for court and prepare the Section 9 Witness Statement.
- The BACME Service will prepare the court bundle and issue the summons to the parent with the date they must appear in court.
- The BACME Service Court Officer will present the case at court on behalf of the school.
- If the parent enters a guilty plea the matter will be dealt with on the day.
- If the parent enters a not guilty plea a date will be set for trial and the BACME Service will take the stand as a witness.

If there has been significant improvement the BACME Officer and or the School Attendance Lead will write to the parent/child praising them for the improvement and if they continue to monitor the case will be closed after four weeks.

This policy has been consulted and ratified by:

Ratified By:	Signature	Date
Governing Body		
Student Council		
Headteacher		