



# The Woodland Federation Attendance Policy

## **Philosophy**

The Woodlands Federation consisting of Winkleigh Primary School and Kings Nympton Primary School is committed to providing a full and efficient educational experience for all pupils. We believe that if pupils are to benefit from education, good attendance is crucial. As a Federation we do all that we can to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils. Any problems that prevent full attendance will be identified and addressed as speedily as possible.

It is the policy of our schools to celebrate achievement. Attendance is a critical factor to a productive and successful school career. Our schools will actively promote and encourage 100 per cent attendance for all our pupils. Our schools will give a high priority to conveying to parents and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents have a vital role to play and that there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance.

If there are problems which affect a pupil's attendance we will investigate, identify and strive in partnership with parents and pupils to resolve those problems as quickly and efficiently as possible. We will adopt a clearly focused approach aimed at returning the pupil to full attendance at all times.

## **Objectives**

- to encourage full attendance and punctuality
- to record and monitor attendance and absenteeism and apply appropriate strategies to minimise its occurrence
- to acknowledge and reward a successful record of attendance
- to ensure a consistent approach throughout the school

## **Statutory Duty of Schools**

The Education Act 1996 requires parents or guardians to ensure their children receive efficient, full-time education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

Schools are responsible for recording pupil attendance twice a day; once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. An entry must be made in the attendance register for all pupils of compulsory school age who are on the school's admission roll.

## **Principles**

Parents are legally responsible for ensuring that a child of compulsory school age attends school regularly. We will work towards ensuring that all pupils feel supported and valued. We will send a clear message that if a pupil is absent, she/he will be missed. We will consult with all members of the school community and the Education Welfare Service in developing and maintaining the whole school attendance policy.

We will encourage parents/carers to be actively involved in promoting their child's attendance. We will ensure that all staff are aware of the requirements of the registration process and that they receive training on Registration Regulations and the Law relating to attendance. Regular information will be sent to parents and pupils informing them of attendance rates and related issues. Promoting positive staff attitudes to pupils returning after absence will ensure regular evaluation of attendance policy and procedures by Senior Managers and the school governors. Attendance will be an important feature of the school Improvement Plan. Consistent and vigorous monitoring and evaluation procedures will be in place.

All absences from school must be covered by a written note / email or phone call from parents/carers. Our schools have a statutory duty to ensure that all absences are legitimate and justifiable and law requires the number of authorised and unauthorised absences to be reported to parents individually, through each child's report, and corporately. Punctuality is also important. Children should arrive at school between 8.50am and 9.00am. The school is unable to provide supervision before 8.50am. Arriving after 9.00am not only disrupts the class but many children feel self-conscious and embarrassed when they arrive after everyone else has settled and can then find it more difficult to focus.

An absence request form or copy of the appointment card / letter is required for all medical appointments (non-emergency) as requested by the Education Welfare Officer.

## Procedures

The statutory requirement for registration means that any child that arrives after the registration period (9.00am to 9.05am and 1.15 pm to 1.20pm) should be marked L for late. If the child arrives after close of registration (9.15am and 1.30pm) then unless due to a medical appointment or other authorised circumstances they will be marked as an unauthorised absence. Any child arriving late at school should report to the school office to be signed in, this is to ensure that we have a record of attendance in case of fire.

Guidance on the accurate completion of registers is held by the administration team.

Parents / carers are asked to contact school by 9.30am each day a child is absent.

If contact is not made with school, then every effort will be made to contact a child's parent / carer. Once registers have been taken, if a child has not been officially reported as absent our Admin staff will telephone to make contact with a parent / carer, to ensure that the child / children are safe. If we cannot make contact on a home number, we then try a mobile. If we still have not heard from a parent / carer by 10.30am we try other contact numbers held. Ultimately, if we cannot ascertain that a child is at home safe with a parent / carer the pupil is deemed as a 'missing child' and may be reported to the Authorities.

There is a termly award/celebration assembly that includes acknowledgement of good or improving attendance.

Absence request forms should be completed and submitted to the Headteacher / Attendance Officer in advance of the absence. (Retrospective requests cannot be considered.) The Headteacher will assess the request using the criteria shown below and return the form to the parent/carer; Schools are only allowed by law, to authorise non-medical absences if requested in advance by a parent with whom the pupil normally resides. A school can only authorise such a request if they are satisfied that there are "exceptional circumstances" which apply.

However, even if there are exceptional circumstances, schools can still consider any other relevant factors such as previous attendance rates; the ability of the pupil to catch-up on missed work; the wider impact of missing the specified period of time. Devon County Council's advice is that schools must be extremely cautious about approving such requests if the pupil's education is likely to be significantly impacted upon.

Parents should ensure that they know whether the absence will be authorised or not before they go away as an unauthorised absence could result in a penalty notice or court summons being issued to each parent for each pupil affected. It is therefore recommended that a completed absence request form is sent into the school **at least three school weeks** before the intended absence.

## **Absence from school may be authorised for the following reasons:**

- Sickness
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments (parents should strive to secure appointments outside of school times where possible)
- Days of religious observance
- Exceptional and unavoidable circumstances. These will be made at the discretion of the Headteacher.
- Seeing a parent who is on leave from the armed forces
- External examinations

## **Absence from school will not be authorised for:**

- Any type of shopping
- Birthdays
- Resting after a late night
- Minding the house
- Looking after unwell siblings or parents/carers
- Repeated absence for half days, even if it is condoned by parents/carers.
- Funerals, other than those of close family members.

**ONLY THE SCHOOL CAN AUTHORISE ABSENCE, NOT THE PARENT**

### **Absence during Term Time: No holiday requests will be authorised.**

Any other absence will be considered in exceptional circumstances.

The Federation does not recommend parents/carers take pupils out for holidays during term time, as this is detrimental to pupils' progress and achievement.

**Excessive Authorised Absence:** The Federation accepts that some pupils will be absent occasionally because of ill health, and that some are affected by chronic illness which may necessitate frequent or prolonged absence. However, apart from such cases, the school will usually authorise a maximum of 20 sessions of absence for ill health in any academic year. If a pupil is absent for more than 20 sessions, parents/carers will be asked to provide written verification of illness. (20 sessions = 10 school days) Verification can include a letter from a GP or other health professional, an appointment card to show that a pupil has been taken to an appointment, or sight of dated, prescribed medication. In the absence of evidence, the pupil will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer.

The attendance target is set and assessed annually in conjunction with the Education Welfare Officer.

If a child is off for more than three consecutive days we may request medical evidence.

If a pupil is absent for more than three days (six sessions) in a term a letter is sent home to parents highlighting this. If a pupil is absent for more than six days (twelve sessions) in a term the Education Welfare Officer is informed.

<p><b>Above 97%: - Less than 12 Sessions (6 days) absence a year</b></p> <p>Excellent attendance! These students will almost certainly get the best grades they can, leading to better prospects for the future.</p>
<p><b>95%: - 20 Sessions (10 days) absence a year</b></p> <p>These pupils are likely to achieve good grades. Students who take a 2 week holiday every year can only achieve 95% attendance.</p>
<p><b>90%: - 38 Sessions (19 days) absence a year</b></p> <p>Students in this group are missing a month of school per year; it will be difficult for them to achieve their best.</p>
<p><b>85%: - 58 Sessions (29 days) absence a year</b></p> <p>The Government classifies Students in this group as "Persistent Absentees", and it will be almost impossible for them to keep up with work. Parents of students in this group could also face the possibility of legal action being taken by the Local Authority.</p>

The Federation administration team provide a termly monitoring report to the Headteacher listing attendance for each child.

Personalised letters will be sent to parents/carers when their child's attendance drops below 95% and again below 90%. *Note: this has been reinstated as of September 2022, as agreed by governors June 2022.*

It is essential that everyone involved in promoting attendance is clear about the important role that must be carried out in order to raise standards. Responsibility to promote attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community.