



# WOODHALL SCHOOL



**PASSION RESILIENCE RESPONSIBILITY ASPIRATION INCLUSIVITY FAMILY**

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**September 2024**

## **Updated Attendance Policy**

Missing even one day at Woodhall means missing out! Not only do we have a programme of fun events and special activities throughout the term, we work hard to ensure our warm family atmosphere is a happy place to be for our children. Our Attendance Team are constantly working to raise awareness about good attendance with both the children and their families as we know frequent absence has a significant impact on children's learning, friendships, social development, mental health and emotional wellbeing. We have special challenges, rewards and incentives and often share this information on social media so be on the lookout!

If your child's attendance falls below 96%, they are missing significant portions of their learning which can have a detrimental and long-lasting effect on them, as a recent study showed:

***KS2 Pupils who did not achieve the expected in reading, writing and maths in 2019 had an overall absence rate of 4.7% over the key stage, compared with 3.5% among pupils who achieved the expected standard and 2.7% among those who achieved the higher standard.***

In a nutshell, not achieving the expected standard at the end of KS2 (Year 6) means the children are not academically ready for secondary school; most children who are not academically ready for secondary school do not achieve in their GCSEs which in turn severely limits long-term opportunities. Studies have also shown that poor-attenders are often socially excluded and less likely to be invited to play with friends or go to birthday parties.

Therefore, we must work together to ensure our children have every opportunity to learn, socialise and thrive. While we understand that, sometimes, absence cannot be avoided, it should also be kept to an absolute minimum. **Please see the helpful guide below outlining different scenarios and steps you can take to limit absence** (starting from page 3.)

The government has recognised the vital importance of good attendance and have put new, stricter measures in place and the laws around school attendance have changed as of 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024. While we are always striving to work with families and build good attendance, Hertfordshire County Council are now taking a hard-line approach to tackle persistent absence and that may result in penalty notices, large fines and other enforcement options. **Please see the attached letter for more information.**

If you have concerns about your child's attendance, we are always willing to help. You can arrange a meeting with the Attendance Team via email: [attendance@woodhall.herts.sch.uk](mailto:attendance@woodhall.herts.sch.uk) or via the school office. Please remember, before you book your next holiday, the Attendance Team cannot authorise any holiday absence and the school is now required by law to apply for a penalty notice for 5 days of unauthorised absences within ten weeks. **Please see the list of Frequently Asked Questions below for further information** (starting on page 4).

Below are a list of helpful terms and definitions that you may find useful when discussing attendance (page 2).

## Helpful Terms

<b>Poor Attendance</b>	Less than 96% Attendance
<b>Persistent Absence</b>	Less than 90% Attendance
<b>Good Attendance</b>	Attendance is 96% or above
<b>Authorised absence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The reasons you have given for your child's absence have been accepted by the school.</li><li>- We will often ask for evidence to authorise absence.</li></ul>
<b>Unauthorised absence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- When the school does not accept the reason that has been given or agree with the amount of time taken, we will not authorise the absence.</li><li>- If your child is Persistently Absent, we will rarely authorise absence without evidentiary support (i.e. a doctor's letter, the school have sent the child home)</li></ul>
<b>Compulsory School Age</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Your child must start full-time education once they reach compulsory school age. This is on 31 December, 31 March or 31 August following their fifth birthday - whichever comes first. If your child's fifth birthday is on one of those dates then they reach compulsory school age on that date.</li></ul>
<b>Local Authority Attendance Team</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Parents have a legal duty to make sure all compulsory school-aged children have good attendance.</li><li>- Schools have to regularly inform the Local Authority of any pupils who are regularly absent from school, have irregular attendance, or have missed 10 school days or more without the school's permission.</li></ul>

Scenario	Steps to take...	Return to School...
<p><b>My child has sickness or diarrhoea.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="427 170 783 203">1. <b>Keep your child at home.</b></li> <li data-bbox="427 259 903 327">2. On <b>each day of absence</b>, notify the <b>School Office via email</b> on:  <a href="mailto:attendance@woodhall.herts.sch.uk">attendance@woodhall.herts.sch.uk</a>  <b>The School Office is very busy and it is not always possible to answer the phone or pick up messages quickly. We advise you contact the School Office by email rather than on the phone.</b></li> </ol>	<p>If a child vomits or has diarrhoea, parents <u>should keep them off school for a period of 24 hours.</u></p> <p>Parents should use this time to monitor them carefully. If they think they have been sick for reasons such as over-eating, coughing (non-Covid related) over-exertion, a reaction to something etc. then they should bring them back to school the next day or as soon as they feel well enough.</p> <p>Many children complain of a stomach-ache or headache when they feel anxious or worried. If you suspect that your child is feeling worried, rather than sick, please get them into school and speak to the class teacher as soon as possible.</p> <p>If parents have reason to suspect they have been sick or had diarrhoea <u>due to a virus or bug</u>, they should keep the child off for <u>48 hours from the last episode of sickness or diarrhoea.</u></p>
<p><b>My child feels unwell or has a small injury. I am not sure if they should be in school or not.</b></p>	<p>If your child can eat, watch television or play, they are probably well enough to be in school. Try and get your child to school. Speak to the office staff, Miss Lake or the class teacher. They can help you decide if your child should be in or not.</p> <p>With your permission, a First-Aider can administer appropriate medication and we will contact you if your child is not well enough to be in school.</p>	
<p><b>My child is too unwell to be in school.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="427 1055 783 1088">1. <b>Keep your child at home.</b></li> <li data-bbox="427 1133 903 1200">2. On <b>each day of absence</b>, notify the <b>School Office via email</b> on:  <a href="mailto:attendance@woodhall.herts.sch.uk">attendance@woodhall.herts.sch.uk</a></li> </ol>	<p>If your child is too unwell to attend school, please keep them at home until they feel well enough to return to school.</p> <p>Please see the 'Is My Child Too Ill for School?' available on the school website.</p>
<p><b>My child has symptoms or a confirmed case of Covid-19.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="427 1335 903 1402">1. Only keep your child at home if you feel they are too unwell to attend.</li> <li data-bbox="427 1424 903 1491">2. <u>As soon as possible</u>, notify the <b>School Office via email</b> on:  <a href="mailto:attendance@woodhall.herts.sch.uk">attendance@woodhall.herts.sch.uk</a></li> </ol>	<p>There are no longer any restrictions regarding attendance and Covid-19. If your child feels well enough, they may attend school. If they are too unwell to attend school, please keep them at home until they feel better.</p>
<p><b>My child has a medical or dental appointment during school hours.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="427 1592 903 1760">1. Before the <b>day of the appointment</b>, notify the <b>School Office either in person or via email</b> on:  <a href="mailto:attendance@woodhall.herts.sch.uk">attendance@woodhall.herts.sch.uk</a></li> <li data-bbox="427 1827 903 1995">2. As soon as possible, provide the school with proof of your appointment. A copy can be emailed or given to a member of the Office Staff.</li> </ol>	<p>Please do not book medical or dental appointments during the school day unless it is absolutely necessary. If it is during school hours, your child should attend school before and after the appointment.</p>

Scenario	Steps to take...	Return to School...
<p><b>My child needs a day off school for a non-medical reason (holidays/ family events/ religious observance/ bereavements)</b></p>	<p>1. Before the <b>day of absence</b>, you must <b>notify the School Office either in person or via email on:</b> <a href="mailto:attendance@woodhall.herts.sch.uk">attendance@woodhall.herts.sch.uk</a></p>	<p>As soon as your child is able to, they must return to school.</p> <p>Please be aware that the headteacher can only authorise absence in <u>exceptional circumstances</u> and this will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p><u>School cannot authorise any absence for holidays. This will go down as unauthorised.</u></p>
	<p>2. Complete a Leave of Absence Request Form (available from the school office and on the school website.) Provide any necessary evidence.</p>	
	<p>3. School will notify you if any of your absence will be authorised or not.</p>	
<p><b>I cannot get my child to school for personal reasons.</b></p>	<p>1. Before the <b>day of absence</b>, <b>notify the School Office via email on:</b> <a href="mailto:attendance@woodhall.herts.sch.uk">attendance@woodhall.herts.sch.uk</a></p>	<p>Unless your child is ill or there are exceptional circumstances, it is a <u>legal requirement for your child to have good attendance.</u></p> <p>Please be aware that the headteacher can only authorise absence in <u>exceptional circumstances</u> and this will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>You must make arrangements with family or friends to get your child to school.</p> <p>If you have personal issues and this is affecting your child's attendance, we can try to help you.</p>
	<p>2. <b>School will call you.</b> We will call you to discuss your circumstances.</p>	

**Frequently Asked Questions:**

What will happen if...	
<p><b>My child's attendance has not been authorised?</b></p>	<p>Authorisation is at the School's Discretion in consultation with the LA. Authorisation is not automatically given because you have informed the school of absence.</p>
<p><b>I do not inform the school of my child's absence?</b></p>	<p>Schools also have a safeguarding duty, under section 175 Education Act 2002, to investigate any unexplained absences.</p> <p>If you do not inform us of your child's absence, we will not authorise it. If we are concerned for your child's welfare, we may ask the Police to do a welfare check or report the absence to social services.</p>

What will happen if...	
<p><b>If my child's attendance is less than 96%?</b></p>	<p>Please be aware, poor attendance may be a safeguarding concern and could trigger immediate steps by the Safeguarding Team. If your child has poor attendance, you will be notified in the following steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. You will receive a warning email to alert you of your child's attendance. Early on in the term, even one or two absences can affect the attendance percentage. Please do not worry at this point, accept this as a 'heads up' and ensure your child's attendance improves in the coming weeks.</li> <li>2. If your child's attendance does not improve, you will be sent a final warning email. This indicates we have serious concerns about your child's attendance. You must make every effort to improve your child's attendance after this email.</li> <li>3. Should your child's attendance still not improve, we will organise a meeting with you. You may be called to a meeting earlier if there are specific issues we wish to discuss with you.</li> <li>4. If your child's attendance still does not improve, we are required by law to notify the Local Authority (LA). We will contact you to inform you that we are contacting the LA.</li> <li>5. The LA will send you a Fixed Penalty Notice for <b>£80</b>. This will increase to <b>£160</b> if it is not paid within 28 days. If your child's parents live at separate addresses, <u>each adult with a parental responsibility will be sent an individual Fixed Penalty Notice.</u></li> <li>6. If a second Penalty Notice is issued to the same parent for the same child within a three-year period, <u>the fine will immediately be £160</u> with no option to pay the lower rate.</li> <li>7. If the parent commits a third offense in a three-year rolling period, the local authority will consider other enforcement options available to them.</li> </ol>
<p><b>My child has a high level of absence during the half term?</b></p>	<p>We will always try to work with you to help you improve your child's attendance. However, schools have to inform the Local Authority of any pupils who are regularly absent from school, have irregular attendance, or have missed <b>5</b> school days or more without the school's permission.</p> <p>If your child is persistently absent, the LA Attendance Officer may write to you or arrange to meet with you to discuss your child's attendance.</p> <p><b>If your child's attendance does not improve significantly, each adult with parental responsibility will be issued a Fixed Penalty Notice for £80. This will increase to £160 if it is not paid within 28 days.</b></p>

<p><b>I am called to an attendance meeting?</b></p>	<p>We want to work with you to improve your child’s attendance. If we have concerns, we will arrange a meeting with you. In this meeting, we will develop a plan to improve attendance and can discuss your child’s specific situation including any medical, social or emotional barriers to good attendance. Please bring any letters, information or evidence you think will help.</p>
<p><b>I am struggling to get my child into school?</b></p>	<p>Please contact the School Office. We can arrange a meeting to discuss your circumstances and develop a plan to help improve your child’s attendance.</p> <p>We have introduced a programme to help tackle EBSA (emotionally based school avoidance.) If you think your child needs extra support, please let us know.</p> <p>Extra resources are available online, please see our website.</p>
<p><b>My child’s attendance is excellent?</b></p>	<p>There are lots of different ways we celebrate attendance at Woodhall including certificates, class incentives and individual rewards. Look out for more information on the school website and in the ‘Woodhall Weekly’!</p>
<p><b>I have spoken to the class teacher, Miss Lake or the Office Staff about attendance.</b></p>	<p>Mrs Nikki Gillibrand or Mrs Cooper Battersby are responsible for school attendance.</p> <p>Life in school is very busy and sometimes you may catch the class teacher or Miss Lake give them information about attendance. Of course, you may continue to share information with any member of staff, but from now on, they will ask you to also pass this information on to us directly via the new attendance email address: <a href="mailto:attendance@woodhall.herts.sch.uk">attendance@woodhall.herts.sch.uk</a> (unless the matter is of a confidential nature)</p> <p>This ensures that we have the most up-to-date information and can make effective decisions regarding your child’s attendance.</p>
<p><b>My child has a chronic illness that affects their attendance?</b></p>	<p>Please arrange to meet with Mrs Cooper Battersby, the school Attendance Lead. We can work together to put measures in place to ensure your child has access to school and their education.</p> <p>This may include working with outside agencies such as the Family Worker or the School Nurse.</p>

[attendance@woodhall.herts.sch.uk](mailto:attendance@woodhall.herts.sch.uk).

Kind Regards,  
**Mrs Cooper Battersby**  
**Assistant Headteacher and Attendance Lead**  
**Woodhall School**