

Widford Lodge

PREPARATORY SCHOOL



Policy on Attendance

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers and pupils in the school, including in the EYFS

Reviewed and approved by Proprietor March 2022
Next Review March 2023

Widford Lodge School is committed to working with parents to support their children's attendance at school. As required by the Department for Education's statutory guidance "Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021", we follow statutory and local authority guidelines as outlined below. We are required to have our attendance records available for inspection and to pass these on to pupils' next schools. At all times, the children's interests are paramount and we aim to act in collaboration with parents to facilitate the highest possible levels of attendance and benefits to the children.

The Department for Education (DfE) states that: "central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school. The government expects schools and local authorities to:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; and
- Act early to address patterns of absence"

With effect from 1st September 2015, a pupil is deemed to be a 'persistent absentee' by the Department for Education where their attendance falls below 90%.

Widford Lodge monitors attendance levels weekly and analyses patterns. We may initiate conversations with parents where attendance falls below 95% and contact parents to invite them to attend a meeting to discuss strategies to improve attendance where the rate approaches the 90% level.

All requests for absence including those for medical appointments, visits to new schools etc should be made via the form available from the school website or the rack in the school lobby. We will not routinely authorise requests for holiday absence. Where any such requests are received and there are extenuating circumstances, the Headteacher checks the attendance level of the pupil before making a decision. Holiday requests exceeding three days absence will not be authorised and if still taken, will therefore be recorded as unauthorised absence. The outcome of all requests is communicated to the parent, including whether attendance level is a contributing factor.

Essex County Council's Missing Education and Child Employment Service is committed to the principle that all children have the right to a suitable education and regular school attendance is vital to enable young people to achieve their ambitions through education, training and life-long learning. They suggest that "schools should have systems in place to enable parents to notify them on the first (and subsequent) day(s) a child is unable to attend school due to illness. Schools should only authorise absences that are reported as being due to illness, where they are satisfied that the absences are genuine. If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, schools may request that parents provide medical evidence to cover the absence. This evidence could be in the form of: an appointment card / slip confirming that the child/young person had cause to visit their GP; a text message confirming that an appointment had been made with the GP; a photocopy of the tear off slip retained by the parent when a prescription is issued; a photocopy of the label on any medication prescribed for the pupil in question."

Where pupils are absent for three or more consecutive days due to illness, Widford Lodge may ask for medical evidence as detailed above. Where pupils are absent because they have tested positive for covid 19 and are required to self isolate by Government guidance, these absences are not included in the statistics that lead to us discussing attendance with parents.

Action will be taken by Widford Lodge to meet/discuss attendance with parents where attendance falls below 90%. Where pupils' attendance levels fall below 85%, Widford Lodge will liaise with the Council's Compliance Attendance Team and may issue a legal action warning letter to parents, using the template provided by the Missing Education and Child Employment Service. If, following this, the attendance does not improve, we may need to instruct the Compliance Attendance team to commence legal action.

At each stage of this process, we aim to meet with and help parents who may be experiencing difficulties with their children's attendance levels and the legal action described above would always be a last resort.

Attendance during Covid 19 Pandemic

During periods of remote learning imposed by the Government, pupils are expected to attend all live lessons and to complete work set for all subjects. Where this is not feasible and has been agreed between the parents and the teacher, pupils may prioritise English and maths work. Any circumstances such as illness/planned power cuts affecting wifi etc should be advised to the form teacher as registers are still taken for each online lesson and absences are followed up by the Deputy Head – Pastoral and the Headteacher.

When school is fully open for onsite learning, all pupils are expected to attend in line with the Government's guidance. Widford Lodge will work co-operatively with parents who are reluctant or anxious about their child attending school and may agree temporary and minimal adjustments to drop off and pick up times, for example. However, the usual procedures to monitor and follow up attendance will be followed and we will liaise with the Attendance Compliance and Safeguarding teams as appropriate.

Pupils self isolating at home because of a positive covid 19 test are expected to attend live lessons and complete work set on Teams, unless they are not well enough to do so. Parents should advise the office of the dates of positive tests and symptoms and should let the form teacher know if the pupil is not well enough to take part in the school's remote provision.

Punctuality and Reporting a Pupil's Absence

Our registers open at 8.40am, the morning bell is rung and the gates are closed at 8.45am and registers close at 8.50am. Any child arriving after the gates have closed must report to the school office and will be marked as present but late. Regular lateness will be followed up with parents as it can be unsettling for the child.

If your child has an unplanned absence from school, please telephone the office between 8am and 8.30am to speak to a member of staff, giving the reason for the absence. Alternatively, you can email the office before 8.30am. Please see our "Missing Child and Child Not Collected Policy" for details of the action we take where we have not had any communication from a parent regarding the unplanned absence of a pupil.