WOKING HIGH SCHOOL

CURRICULUM & SCHOOL PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

Woking High School Student Attendance Policy

Governor Committee Responsible: Curriculum & School Performance

Date Created: SLT Responsibility: CRO

Review Period: Annual Date Adopted: Oct 2017

Date Ratified: Next Review Date: Oct 2018

Policy Updated: October 2017

Review Date: October 2018 unless new legislation requires change earlier

Responsibilities: Assistant Head teacher- Pastoral

Student Support Officer
The staff at Woking High School are committed, in partnership with parents, students and governors to build a school which serves the community and of which the community is proud. All students benefit from regular school attendance and in order for our students to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and every student should be in school, on time, every day that the school is open unless the reason for the absence is exceptional. To this end the school will do all we can to encourage parents/carers to ensure that the children in their care achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent full attendance are identified and acted on promptly.

Our Expectations

All students must:

• Attend school regularly - all students should be aiming to attend school every day and any student with less than 100% attendance will be monitored as a cause for concern.

• Attend school punctually

• Attend school appropriately prepared for the day

• Approach the form tutor or Learning Co-ordinator if there are any reasons preventing attendance at school.

All parents/carers who have day to day responsibility for the students will:
• Encourage regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities;

• Ensure that the students arrive at school on time and are prepared for the school day

• Ensure that they contact the school immediately and confirm with a letter / email / phone call if the student is unable to attend

• Write a reason for absence in the student journal as soon as the student returns to school

• Notify school immediately of any changes to the contact details including changes in mobile telephone numbers and e-mail addresses

• Notify school of any circumstances outside school that might affect the behaviour and learning of the student
The school staff will:

• Contact the parent/ carer, on the first day of absence when a student fails to attend and no communication has been received from home

• Follow up unexplained absences, this may require a referral to outside agencies (e.g. Police, Social care, Education welfare) if the school is unable to ascertain the whereabouts of a student to ensure his/ her safety (see ‘Safeguarding’) 

• Contact parents/ carers of students who are not attending regularly to express concern and to clarify the school’s and the LA’s expectations with regard to regular school attendance 

• Refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to Education Welfare. Failure by the family to comply with the planned support set by Education Welfare may result in further actions, e.g. a Penalty Notice, parental prosecution or an application for an Education Supervision Order. 

• Keep regular and accurate records of attendance for all students, at least twice daily 

• Monitor individual student’s attendance 

• Encourage good attendance through a system of reward and recognition (see ‘Encouraging Attendance section’)
• Provide a welcoming atmosphere

• Provide a safe learning environment

• Listen to any student’s concerns and respond appropriately

• Regularly monitor and discuss attendance issues with the Educational Welfare service

• Meet the requirements of the UN Convention – The Rights of the Child by consulting with the School Council and Year Councils by ensuring that whenever possible, students are consulted in all the decisions that relate to them.

Punctuality Procedures

Students who arrive late after the bell at 8.55am are required to ‘sign in’ with school prefects in the main entrance and continue to their tutor room or assembly.

Students who arrive after the registration period but before Period 1 are required to ‘sign in’ at the main school office and go directly to their lesson.

It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that their tutor marks them as present on the school register, for example if a student arrives late to a lesson or is engaged outside the lesson in an alternative activity (such as Peer Mentoring etc), students must ensure the tutor has amended the register to reflect their attendance.

Students who arrive on the school premises at morning break or lunchtime should go directly to the school office to ‘sign in’.

If students arrive late for a legitimate reason (e.g. due to a medical appointment etc)
they must ensure their parents/carers have completed and signed the reason for lateness in their journals, this must be shown to the office staff on arrival.

If a student arrives late to school and/or to a lesson more than twice in one week, they will be required to attend a detention.

In the interests of safety this procedure MUST be followed.
Encouraging Attendance

Woking High School encourages regular attendance in the following ways:

Providing a caring and welcoming learning environment
Responding promptly to a student’s or parent/ carer's concerns about the school or other students
Marking registers accurately and punctually during morning and afternoon sessions.
Displaying attendance statistics
Monitoring student’s attendance and contacting parents where necessary
Celebrating good and improved attendance with a range of certificates and rewards
Liaising with the Education Welfare Service on a weekly basis
Monitoring students, informing parents/carers in writing of irregular attendance, arranging meetings with them if necessary and referring the family to Education Welfare (EW) if the irregular attendance continues.
Registration of unexplained absences will be sent to form tutors on a weekly basis and the tutor will discuss the absence with student and / or parent /carer. If the absence is not explained within 2 weeks, the school records will be amended as an unauthorised absence.

Responding To Non-Attendance

When a student does not attend the school will respond in the following manner:

If a parent / carer has made no contact on the first day of absence the school may consider the absent student as potentially being at risk of harm as the absence will
be unaccounted for and it will be a safeguarding matter (see Safeguarding)

The school will keep parents informed if absence persists and a referral will be
made to the Education Welfare Service

Failure to comply with the expectations set by the Education Welfare Service may
result in further action, an application for an Education Supervision Order, or Court
Prosecution.

In the case of long term or frequent absence due to a medical condition verification
from a G.P or other relevant body will be required before absences can be
authorised by the school

Truancy Patrol may be called to students who are absent from school without
notice from the parent/ carer, this may result in a home visit from the Police and an
Education Welfare Officer

Parents of students who are persistently absent from school for unauthorised
circumstances are liable to receive a Penalty Notice from the Local Authority

SAFEGUARDING

A child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding
the interests of the child is the responsibility of all of everyone involved with that child
and if any child fails to attend this school on a regular basis it will be considered a
safeguarding matter.

A student who is absent without explanation at any time will be considered at risk of
harm. If a student is missing school without explanation the school may need to refer
them to external agencies (such as the Police, Children’s services and / or Education
welfare services ) if it is not possible for the school to make contact with the parent/
carer in order to ensure the student is safe.
UNDERSTANDING TYPES OF ABSENCE

Absence can be classified by the school (not by the parent/carer) as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. Although parents/carers offer a note, telephone call or personal contact regarding absence only the school within the context of the law, can approve absence.

Legitimate reasons for absence may include the following examples, and would normally be authorised by the school:

- Sickness
- Medical or dental appointments (wherever possible these should be arranged outside of school hours)
- Days of religious observance
- Exceptional family circumstances (such as bereavement)
- Emergencies or other unavoidable causes

Where a student is absent without prior authorisation and an explanation is required the absence will be treated as unauthorised. Unauthorised absences are those the school does not consider reasonable and for which no ‘leave’ has been granted, and
may include the following examples:

- Parents/ carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences that are not properly explained
- Students who arrive at school after registration has closed
- Looking after other children
- Day trips or holidays during term time
- Continued absence after a student has been classified as a persistent absentee
- Regular or repeating patterns of absence
If a student is frequently absent through sickness, the school may require medical evidence in order to approve the absence, without such evidence the absence may be marked as unauthorised.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)
A student will be classified as a ‘Persistent Absentee’ if they are absent for more than 10% of the time. Absence at this level can impact considerably on a student’s education and their future prospects and the school requires parent/carers full support and cooperation to tackle this. We monitor all absences thoroughly; any student who is a PA or at risk of becoming a PA is given priority and parents/carers will be informed of this. PA students are tracked and monitored carefully through our Pastoral system.

PA students and their parent/carers are subject to an Action Plan, which may include:

- A letter of concern
- A meeting between parent/carers and a member of school staff
- Use of personalised attendance plan and individual targets
- Additional support may be offered through the Pastoral team (depending on individual circumstance)
A review of Special Educational Needs and disabilities

All PA cases, regardless of circumstance, are automatically made known to Education Welfare services and may result in legal action such as a Penalty Notice or prosecution.
With the exception of unauthorised leave of absence taken in term time, parents will be sent a formal warning of their liability to receive such a notice before it is issued.

Long Term Absence

Students absent for a significant period of time with good reason (perhaps due to a medical condition or exceptional circumstances) may be provided with set work related to their school curriculum if deemed appropriate by the school. Please refer to our 'Students with Medical Needs Policy' for further information.

The appropriate Learning Co-ordinator will interview students returning to school after long-term absence as part of the reintegration and support programme. Subject teachers will provide students with appropriate work to catch up in relevant classes. If required, students will be given additional time and resources to make this process as supportive as possible.

Changing schools

It is important that if families decide to send the child/children in their care to a different school that they inform Woking High School, in writing, as soon as possible.

A student will not be removed from the school roll until the following information has been received:

- The date the student will be leaving the school
- The date the student will commence attendance at their new school
The address of the new school

The new home address, if it is known.

The student’s school records will then be sent on to the new school as soon as possible. In the event that the school has not been informed of the above information, the details will be referred to the Education Welfare service. Any student leaving the school is automatically referred to the LA Tracking Officer.

Removal from the school roll

All schools must inform their local authority of any pupil who is going to be deleted from the admission register where they:

• have been taken out of school by their parents and are being educated outside the school system e.g. home education;
• have ceased to attend school and no longer live within reasonable distance of the school at which they are registered;
• have been certified by the school medical officer as unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school before ceasing to be of compulsory school age, and neither he/she nor his/her parent has indicated the intention to continue to
attend the school after ceasing to be of compulsory school age;

•

are in custody for a period of more than four months due to a final court order and the proprietor does not reasonably believe they will be returning to the school at the end of that period; or,

•

have been permanently excluded.

All schools must inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without the school’s permission for a continuous period of 10 school days or more, at such intervals as are agreed between the school and the local authority (or in default of such agreement, at intervals determined by the Secretary of State)
Leave of Absence

The school holiday dates are published a year in advance and the school therefore do not see any reason for parents / carers to need to take their child out of school during term time. Leave of absence in term time will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances. Where absence in term time is unavoidable, a Leave of Absence application form must be requested from the Headteacher’s PA and submitted for consideration by the Headteacher on behalf of the school governors, no less than two weeks prior to the requested date. If leave of absence is taken in term time without prior authorisation by the school, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and liable to a penalty notice.

The Government have changed the regulations which permitted Headteachers to grant leave of absence for the purposes of a family holiday. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, states that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher is required to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted. (The amendment has not defined ‘exceptional circumstances’ and therefore Headteacher/ Governing Body will be responsible for deciding what they consider to be ‘exceptional circumstances’).
Issuing of Penalty Notices

The Headteacher can request that the Local Authority consider issuing a Penalty Notice to parents, when students are taken out of school for 5 or more day’s leave of absence without authorisation. In addition to unauthorised leave of absence, Penalty Notices may also be issued when a student is stopped by Truancy Patrol or at the discretion of the Education Welfare Manager if a parent/carer fails to ensure regular school attendance.

The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 per parent/carer per child if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days, Surrey County Council will consider a prosecution in the Magistrates Court.

Circumstances where a Penalty Notice may be issued

Regular absence from school will seriously affect student’s learning. The parent/carer has a legal responsibility to ensure their child regularly attends school and permitting absence from school without good reason is an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

The issue of a Penalty Notice will also be considered where attendance has fallen below 90% and there are no less than ten unauthorised absence sessions during the preceding half-term. The parents/carers who fail to secure their child’s regular school attendance and fail to engage with supportive measures to improve attendance proposed by the school or Education Welfare Officer will be a factor when considering the issue of a Penalty Notice. Unauthorised absence will include late arrival after the close of registration.

If a child is taken out of school without leave of absence during term time for 5 days or more without the authority of the Headteacher, a Penalty Notice will be issued to
each parent/carer for each child’s absence. In these circumstances, a warning will not be given where it can be shown that parents/carers had previously been warned that such absences would not be authorised.

When a student comes to the notice of a Truancy Patrol, the student’s pattern of school attendance is investigated. If there are unauthorised absences in the preceding 4 months, a warning letter may be sent to the parents/carers. If there are further unauthorised absences during the subsequent 15 school days, a Penalty Notice will be issued to each parent/carer. If there is no significant improvement in attendance in the 3 subsequent weeks, a Penalty Notice will be issued.

Leaving school with permission

- Parents/carers are requested to confirm in writing the reason for the absence, the time the student will need to leave the premises, the expected return and whether the student is being collected or will make their own way to their destination.
- The letter will be signed by the form tutor and shown to the main school office before the student is allowed to ‘sign out’
- Students will be issued with an appropriate slip to record the time of leaving, destination and expected return.
- Parents/carers are requested to report to the office before the student is allowed to leave the school site.
Leaving School without Permission

If a student leaves the school premises without permission, the school will contact the parent/carer as soon as possible. Should the school be unable to make contact with a family member or named contact it may be appropriate, in certain circumstances, to contact the Police and register the student as a missing person. This would only be done once the school premises have been searched.

School Day

 Registers will be closed at 9.30 a.m. and 1.45 p.m. Subsequent lateness will be recorded as an unauthorised absence for that session. A suitable explanation will be needed if this is to be recorded as an authorised absence.

Working together

In order for the school's Attendance Policy to be successful, every member of staff makes attendance a high priority and conveys this to the students at all times. Parents/carers need to support this approach in the home to ensure that children are receiving consistent messages about the value of education and importance of regular attendance.