

# Walderslade Girls' School

## Attendance Policy

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### Document Change History

Date:	Version:	Description of Changes:
11/23	1.1	Annual review.

## Mission Statement

*“To nurture and develop all people in our Trust so that they reach their full potential academically, vocationally, and personally, including being positive role models for future generations in the community. We will achieve this by providing high quality values-based education that cultivates employability and life skills making our schools the first choice for young people, parents, carers, staff and employers.”*

## Values

The values of Respect, Excellence, Collaboration, Independence, Perseverance, Enjoyment, Leadership, Integrity and Care are central to everything we do at the Skills for Life Trust.

## Statement of Equality

We have carefully considered and analysed the impact of this policy on equality and the possible implications for pupils with protected characteristics, as part of our commitment to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

## Purpose

The purpose of this a policy is to promote outstanding attendance in order to allow students to achieve their full potential.

## Introduction

At Walderslade Girls’ School we believe that high attendance rates are a significant factor in maintaining the quality of education that we provide. If we are to ensure the continuity of education for our students, support students in reaching their potential and prepare them for the world of work, we must ensure that absenteeism is kept to an absolute minimum.

Regular attendance to school is a legal requirement. Under Section 444 1/1A of the Education Act 1996 parents and carers of a child of compulsory school age are under a legal duty to ensure the regular attendance of their child at the school where they are a registered pupil.

The DfE guidance [Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2022](#) states that attendance to school is “essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances”.

- At Walderslade Girls School, the attendance lead role is fulfilled by Mrs L Devaney, [ldevaney@sflt.org.uk](mailto:ldevaney@sflt.org.uk)

- The Senior Leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance to school is Mrs L Devaney, assistant headteacher.

## **What is Good Attendance?**

At Walderslade Girls' School our target is 96% attendance.

Government research shows students who have less than 90% attendance (20 or more days missed in a year) achieve, on average, a whole grade lower than expected in examinations. An adult with day to day care has a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school regularly. Failure to fulfil this responsibility can lead to prosecution or enforcement.

## **What are the benefits of good attendance to the students?**

- To develop and maintain new relationships within the school community.
- To participate in new experiences.
- To learn and excel within all subject areas.
- To build resilience and skills for adult life.
- To improve their chances of a good career.
- To develop independence, including being punctual.
- To feel safe and listened to.

## **How can home support with attendance?**

- Tell your child how important school is.
- Praise your child for working hard and attending school.
- Organise non-urgent medical appointments outside of school time.
- Check that your child is organised for school (with a bag to carry their things).
- Make sure your child has a good night's sleep and wakes up in good time for the school day, arriving no later than by 8.30 am to be in time for form time.
- Take time to talk to your child about what they have done in school.
- Contact the school at the first opportunity if your child is genuinely ill or is unable to attend.
- Talk to someone at the school if there is a problem or reason why your child finds it difficult to attend regularly.

## Aims and Principals

- To develop an ethos in which students' attendance is valued as a key component of advancing their educational achievement and progress.
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority so that students have the opportunity to make progress and achieve outstanding educational outcomes.
- To improve the overall attendance percentage of students at WGS and reduce persistent absence.
- To provide support and guidance to students and parents and carers in matters relating to attendance and punctuality.
- To provide a strategic approach to gathering, analysing and interpreting attendance and punctuality data and share this data with Heads of Year and the Senior Leadership Team.
- To provide and regularly review the system of rewards and sanctions.
- To work closely in an effective partnership with the Attendance Advisory Service for Schools and Academies (AASSA) for the Local Authority in addressing attendance/punctuality problems.
- To work in an effectively with parents/carers.
- To provide a 'first day' contact using the Arbor system and personal telephone calls.

## Practice

Any student who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity. Definitions of these terms can be found in Appendix A. Only the Headteacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence must be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.

Attendance information is shared on termly documents to parents or at any time a parent requests it. Occasionally parents may be asked to give permission for their child to attend attendance clinics to discuss barriers to good attendance at school. Attendance information is also shared via the Arbor APP and is updated in real time, so parents can see daily attendance.

'Good' attendance is any attendance figure exceeding 96%, any attendance below this figure is classified as 'poor'.

Good attendance increases a student's successful attainment outcomes. At WGS we will support students and their families in attaining and retaining good attendance.

# Roles and Responsibilities

## The Governing Body

The Governing Body is responsible for ratifying and reviewing the school's Attendance Policy and for regularly monitoring attendance and punctuality data.

## The Assistant Headteacher with responsibility for Attendance:

- Implementing the school's Attendance Policy.
- Ensuring that the policy is notified to all staff and complied with at all levels.
- Ensuring that the policy is made available to all staff appointees and to parents and carers who request it.
- Ensuring that the policy is regularly reviewed and, where necessary, revised.
- Authorising termly attendance reports to the DfE.
- Leading strategies to improve attendance.
- Responsible for regularly liaising with the Attendance Officer.
- Providing documentation regarding attendance and punctuality as required by the Headteacher to Governors.

## The Attendance Officer is responsible for:

- Day to day management of the attendance office.
- Communicating with parents/carers in the event of unauthorised absence.
- Communicating with school staff to promote improved attendance.
- Links with Head of Year in order to seek support in monitoring attendance.
- Meeting regularly with AASSA, keeping a record of the meetings.
- Links with other outside agencies as a means of support.
- Producing weekly and termly attendance figures as required.
- Producing attendance and punctuality data for the Headteacher, SLT and the Governing Body.
- Keeping data updated on a daily basis.
- Informing AASSA of third day, 5 day and 10 days of absence completing the relevant forms and sending the appropriate letters as provided by Medway.
- Requesting Medical Evidence from parents, where appropriate, using the letter provided by Medway.

### **Heads of Year are responsible for:**

- Knowledge of the attendance figures for the year group.
- Liaising with families of students with medical conditions or poor attendance.
- Meeting with the Attendance Officer every two weeks to analyse and share information.
- To celebrate good and improving attendance across the year group.

### **Form Tutors are responsible for:**

- Ensuring that they report any attendance and punctuality concerns to the Head of Year and Attendance Officer.
- Checking and monitoring the attendance register of their tutor group and following through contacts with families.
- Ensuring that their form is aware of the contents of the Attendance Policy.
- Celebrating good and improving attendance.
- Taking appropriate action within current guidelines to counteract lateness to registration and log correctly in Arbor.

### **Teachers are responsible for:**

- Taking an accurate register at the start of every lesson.
- Notifying any attendance and punctuality concerns to the Attendance Officer.
- Contacting the Attendance Officer immediately if a 'flagged' student does not arrive in lesson.
- Taking appropriate action within current guidelines to counteract lateness to class e.g. phoning home etc

### **All Staff are responsible for**

- Supporting and implementing the Attendance Policy.

## **Authorised and Unauthorised Absence**

The Education Act 1996 is clear about absence from a school and the fact that it must differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. In addition, the Anti-Social Behaviour Act (2003) now gives the Local Authority the power to issue penalty fines for unauthorised holidays in term time.

Authorised absence is where the Headteacher has either given approval in advance for a student of compulsory school age to be out of school or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as



satisfactory justification for absence. All other absences must be treated as unauthorised. (ref. DFES 0628-2003)

Parents and carers cannot authorise any absence, only the Headteacher can do this. However, parents and carers can provide reasons for absence for the Headteacher to consider by completing an Absence Request Form.

Parentally-condoned absence can be a problem as it means disruption to a student's education. The school does not have to accept a parental explanation for a student's absence whether written, telephoned or given in person. However, all absences, authorised or not, count against the school statistics.

## **Frequent/Persistent Absence Procedures**

Regular monitoring of the registers will be made by the Attendance Officer, to identify pupils with a pattern of absences that may lead to Persistent Absence (PA). The Attendance Officer will be responsible for putting in place actions for each pupil of concern. Initially the school will try to resolve the problem with parents/carers and this may involve requesting medical evidence in order for the school to authorise any further absence due to ill health and/or an Attendance clinic with the Attendance Officer and relevant staff or outside professionals.

However, if the pattern of unauthorised absence, continues the school will make a referral to the Local Authority. The Attendance Advisory Practitioner and Attendance Officer will communicate regularly to discuss any attendance and punctuality concerns the school may have and review any current cases referred to the LA.

Parents/Carers of children whose attendance drops, will receive a letter to parents requesting that medical evidence is provided by the parent to enable the school to authorise any further absences due to ill health. Further unauthorised absence will result in a parental meeting to allow a plan of support to encourage regular attendance. Further unauthorised absence totalling 10 or more unauthorised sessions where support is not successful, or not engaged with, will result in a referral to the Local Authority for consideration of a Penalty Notice or Court action.

## **Reluctant attenders/school refusal**

You should do everything possible to encourage your child to attend. However, if the reason for their reluctance appears to be school-based, such as difficulty with work, or bullying, please discuss this with the school at the earliest opportunity and the school will do everything possible to resolve. Colluding with your child's reluctance to attend is likely to make the matter worse. School refusal/school phobia is a psychological condition that usually has been medically diagnosed. Other arrangements may be put in place for a child with genuine school phobia.

## Consequences of Poor Attendance /Punctuality

For pupils whose attendance and/or punctuality fails to improve, after a range of interventions and support measures have been tried by the school, the ultimate consequences may be one of the following:

- 1) From February 2004, new measures introduced in the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 have made it possible that certain cases of unauthorised absence from school amounting to 10 sessions (5 days) can be dealt with by way of a Penalty Notice. These Penalty Notices require the recipient to pay a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days, or £120 if paid within 28 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice will result in prosecution.
- 2) The Local authority may initiate court action under Section 444 1/1A of the Education Act 1996, which could lead to fines of up to £2,500, or even imprisonment.
- 3) In some cases, action may be taken under the Children Act 1989 to protect the welfare and development of the child.

## Absence Procedures

First Day	<p>If a student is absent for any reason, their parent/carer is expected to contact the Attendance Office to give an explanation of the absence on the first day by 9.30am, and each subsequent day of absence (by 9.30am). Upon their return to school, they should also send their daughter/ward with a note explaining the absence and a copy of any medical evidence if appropriate.</p> <p>If no contact with the school has been made regarding a student's absence, a text message will be sent to the student's primary parent/carer asking them to explain the absence. If there is no reply, the Attendance Officer will follow up with a phone call using all emergency contacts on the school system. The absence will be recorded onto the school system.</p>
Third Day	<p>The Attendance Officer will continue daily to try to make contact but if this has not been achieved a letter will be sent asking them to contact the school. From the third day of absence medical evidence will be required for the Academy to authorise the absence. Medical evidence can be in the form of copy of prescription, a copy of Doctor/Hospital letter or the pharmacy label on the medication.</p> <p>The Family Liaison Officer (FLO) may be instructed to carry out an unannounced home visit to the registered address. If no contact is made, this may result in a referral to Medway Children's Services.</p>
5 Days	<p>If a student is absent for a period of 5 consecutive days and no contact has been made the School Attendance Officer will inform the AASSA.</p>
10 Days	<p>If any student is absent for a period of 10 consecutive days and no contact has been made a Child Missing Education (CME) will be raised with Medway Council.</p>

Persistent Absence	All absences are monitored and should the absences become a concern a referral to Medway Attendance Advisory Practitioner will be made for them to start intervention with the possibility of court action being taken.
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In the event that the Academy is open to students but a student is unable to attend due to health and safety issues (i.e. snow and ice), we would expect them to work at home on current projects, coursework and homework etc.

Notes received from parents explaining absence should be kept for the remainder of the academic year. If there are attendance concerns about the student that may require further investigation, then the notes may need to be retained for a longer period. These notes will be kept in the student's record file.

## Leave of Absence during Term Time

Parents and carers must not take students out of school during term time except in exceptional circumstances. Authorisation for leave of absence in term time may only be given by the Headteacher. You can show that the reason for the leave of absence satisfies exceptional circumstances and evidence is required. Permission sought after a leave of absence has been taken will not be granted.

A formal application needs to be made in writing or by completing the Absence Request Form to the Headteacher prior to the leave of absence and handed in to the Attendance Officer. The Headteacher will advise their decision in writing.

The school requires written medical evidence of any absence of more than 48 hours, otherwise the absence will not be authorised.

If a leave of absence is taken after it was declined or if it is taken without notice, a Penalty Notice may be issued to each parent. From February 2004, new measures introduced in the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 have made it possible that certain cases of unauthorised absence from school amounting to 10 sessions (5 days) can be dealt with by way of a Penalty Notice. These Penalty Notices require the recipient to pay a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days, or £120 if paid within 28 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice will result in prosecution.

## Illness, Medical and Dental Appointments

As far as possible medical appointments should be made outside school hours. Medical appointments count as authorised absence if evidence is provided. Students should obtain a pass from the Attendance Officer before leaving for the appointment and should sign back in with the Attendance Officer upon their return.

Medical appointments do not necessitate a full day of absence unless substantial travel is required. Proof of time and place of appointment may be requested. Medical evidence may be any of the following:

- Hospital discharge letter
- Copy of your appointment card from your GP
- Copy of the prescription or copy of the medication label.
- Note from your GP (parent can request list of appointment, from the practice manager – free of charge)
- Note from a pharmacist.
- Note from any other health care professional (e.g. physiotherapist, consultant optician, podiatrist etc.

If the authenticity of illness is in doubt the AASSA may in certain circumstances consult the student's GP, once parental consent has been obtained.

## Days of Religious Observance

This is absence to take part in any day set aside exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the student belongs. Parent and carers must give advance notice. This is recorded as an authorised absence.

## Interviews with Prospective Employers / FE provider

Walderslade Girls' School asks for advance notice and proof of the appointment, for example a letter of invitation.

## Isolation

Walderslade Girls' School aims not to suspend or exclude students and will always attempt to isolate pupils internally within the Isolation Room on either the WGS or Greenacre site instead. Internal Isolation has been developed as part of the Behaviour and Conduct Policy as a strategy to avoid the need for suspension which is detrimental to the education of our students. At times, we may also contact other schools in the local area to arrange for students to complete their isolations off site. This will be communicated with parents and students before the first day of the isolation begins. We hope that parents/carers and students will realise that this provision has been put into place to reduce interruptions to learning.

## Suspensions

In situations where suspension is the only option, a student suspended for a fixed term remains on roll and the absence is recorded accordingly. Parents and carers have a duty to ensure that their daughter is not present in a public place within school hours during the first 5 days of suspension. Under the regulations parents and carers may be prosecuted or receive a penalty notice from the Local Authority if their daughter is present in a public place on the specified dates without reasonable justification, as these will be recorded as unauthorised.

From the 6th day of a student's exclusion until the expiry of their suspension students will be required to attend another school provision. Arrangements for this will be made by Walderslade Girls' School. From this 6th day of suspension attendance is shown as a 'B' meaning educated off site. Non-attendance at the alternative provision will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and may lead to a referral to AASSA.

## Exclusions

Exclusions are rare but during the period of appeal or review the absence is authorised.

A student's name may be removed from the school roll on the first day after the day on which:

- i. the independent appeal panel upholds the exclusion
- ii. the independent appeal panel does not uphold the exclusion, but does not direct the student's reinstatement
- iii. the prescribed period for lodging an appeal has expired and the parent has not lodged an appeal
- iv. the parent and carer has, before the expiry of the prescribed period, advised the Clerk to the Governors in writing that she does not intend to appeal

## Punctuality to School

All students are required to be punctual to school. Punctuality to school is a legal requirement and regular punctuality checks will be undertaken.

### Morning

Students must arrive at the school and to their form room in time for registration at 8.30am. Students who arrive after 8.45am will be marked 'late', and be required to return to their Form Tutor at break time to make up the time. Those who arrive after 8.50am will be marked as unauthorised and this will affect their attendance figure and could result in a referral to AASSA.

### Afternoon

For the PM session students will register in form time at 2.50pm. This is an essential part of the school day and failure to attend will be marked as unauthorised.

Attendance and punctuality will be monitored and individuals causing concern will be supported by the Attendance Officer and Pastoral Support Team. Further issues will be reported to the AASSA.

### In School Truancy

Lesson by lesson checks will be made around the school and of the electronic systems in order to identify and sanction in school truants. A list of known truants will be kept by the Attendance Officer who will monitor these children lesson by lesson and keep appropriate staff and parents fully informed. Heads of Year and members of the Senior Leadership Team will have meetings with parents and follow the schools' Behaviour and Conduct Policy regarding sanctions.

## Rewards and Incentives

For every term's attendance there is the opportunity to earn a bronze (96%+), silver (98%+) or gold (100%) certificate.

Students with excellent attendance are also presented with a badge and a certificate at the end of the year.

Heads of Year will reward, through assemblies, tutor groups with the highest attendance and most improved attendance regularly.

Heads of Year will reward individual students who have improved their attendance.

Weekly communication will be sent to those who have 100% attendance.

A letter of recommendation will be sent to those with 100% attendance for the year.

## Reduced Timetables

As part of an Individual Student Plan or due to a medical condition, it may deem necessary to place a student on a reduced timetable. The hours of which are decided between the Assistant Headteacher in charge of Attendance, SENCO or Family Liaison Officer in conjunction with the students' parents or carer. These plans are for a limited period of time, with fortnightly reviews, and are intended to last no longer than six weeks. In some cases, these may be extended but this is only in conjunction with the Assistant Headteacher in charge of attendance and AASSA.

If a student completes their agreed times they will receive both of their registration marks. In some cases students will be provided with work to complete at home. In this instance they will be marked as B, as to not affect their percentage.

## Pregnancy

In cases where a student is pregnant the student should be advised that the Headteacher will need to be informed.

If the school finds out a student is pregnant, a meeting will be arranged with the student and her parents and carers in order to set up a Risk Assessment and to discuss how her educational needs are to be met.

If a female student is absent with a pregnancy related illness, this will require a medical note. Absence for ante-natal classes and if the baby is ill, should be classified as 'authorised'.

Leave for maternity is treated like any other leave of absence. The DfE expects schools to act reasonably and grant a sufficient period of leave from school, taking into consideration the specific circumstances of each case. Ultimately it is at the headteacher's discretion how much leave to grant.

## Appendix A: Categorisation of Absence

Any student who is on roll but not present in the school must be recorded within one of these categories:

- Unauthorised Absence - This is for those students where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason.
- Authorised Absence - This is for those students who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996.
- Approved Educational Activity - This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the school. Students recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes. This would include:
  - Work experience placements
  - Field trips and educational visits
  - Sporting activities
  - Link courses or approved education off site
  - Most types of dual registration

Attendance will be categorised using the following codes:

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances not covered by another Code	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence

<b>I</b>	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
<b>J</b>	Interview	Approved Education Activity
<b>L</b>	Late (before registers closed)	Present
<b>M</b>	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
<b>N</b>	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
<b>O</b>	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
<b>P</b>	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
<b>R</b>	Religious observance	Authorised absence
<b>S</b>	Study leave	Authorised absence
<b>T</b>	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
<b>U</b>	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
<b>V</b>	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
<b>W</b>	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
<b>X</b>	Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils	Not counted in possible attendances
<b>Y</b>	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
<b>Z</b>	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
<b>#</b>	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances



## Equality Impact Assessment

Who is the policy or process intended for?	Pupils	Employees	Govs/ Trustees	Volunteers	Visitors
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Status of the policy or process:	New policy or process			Existing policy or process	
	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>	
Analysis					
Protected Characteristic	Impact analysis			Explanation of impact analysis	
	Positive	Neutral	Negative		
Age:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Disability:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Sex:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Gender reassignment:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Race:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Religion or belief:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Sexual orientation:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Marriage or civil partnership:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Pregnancy and maternity:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Pupil groups (PP/SEN/CLA):	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Evaluation and decision making					
Summary of action taken:					
Final decision:					