

Walderslade Girls' School

Attendance Policy



Introduction

At Walderslade Girls' 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 the students in reaching their potential and prepare them for the world of work, we must ensure that absenteeism is kept to an absolute minimum.

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 his/her child attends school regularly. Failure to fulfil this responsibility can lead to prosecution/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 8.20 am.
- 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 (eg House points, and 100% Club)
- To work closely in an effective partnership with the Attendance Advisory Service to 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 Schoolcomms system and personal telephone calls.

Regular attendance to school is a legal requirement. Under Section 44 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.

Roles and Responsibilities

Attendance Advisory Service to School and Academies (AASSA)

The AASSA works closely with Walderslade Girls' School and may convene home visits, warning letters and Pre Proceedings Panels to which parents and carers and students are invited, in the event of attendance problems. The AASSA may enforce the 1996 Education Act to instigate legal proceedings if required.

The Governing Body

The Governing Body is responsible for ratifying and reviewing the Academy attendance policy and for regularly monitoring attendance and punctuality data.

The Assistant Headteacher: Pastoral Care, Welfare and Guidance is responsible for:

- 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 to read 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 Manager.
- Providing documentation regarding attendance and punctuality as required by the Headteacher to Governors
- Responsible for rewards and sanctions for attendance and punctuality within the school.

The Attendance Manager 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 and Student Services in order to seek support in monitoring attendance
- Meeting fortnightly 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
- Reporting regularly to the AHT Pastoral Care, Welfare and Guidance
- Keeping data updated on a daily basis.
- Checking corridors via CSI (Curriculum Support Intervention) and electronic registers lesson by lesson for internal truants.
- Informing AASSA of third day of absence

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 Manager every two weeks to analyse and share information
- To celebrate good attendance across the year group

Form Tutors are responsible for

- Ensuring that they report any attendance and punctuality concerns to the attendance office
- Checking and monitoring the attendance register of their tutor group and following through contacts with families
- Ensuring that their form are aware of the contents of the Attendance policy
- Celebrating good attendance
- Taking appropriate action within current guidelines to counteract lateness to registration.

Teachers are responsible for

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

All Staff are responsible for

- Supporting and implementing the policy.

AASSA Medway Council

AASSA Medway Council has the right to consider taking legal action or the issue of a penalty notice against parents or carers who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis. Penalty notices are issued by the Local Authority to each parent/carer of the child.

The register is taken every session. AM and PM is designated for attendance reporting.

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 a 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 child's absence whether written, telephoned or given in person. However all absence, authorised or not, counts against the school statistics.

The Attendance Manager will closely monitor attendance and punctuality throughout the school in conjunction with the Head of Year. Ongoing concerns will result in telephone contact/text messages and/or attendance clinics and home visits. Should attendance/punctuality not improve a referral will be made to the AASSA who will proceed with the issue of a Penalty Notice per child per adult which is £120 if paid within 28 days, but is reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Failure to pay will result in prosecution in Medway Magistrates Court.

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 Manager. The Headteacher will advise their decision in writing.

The school requires written medical evidence of any absence of more than three days, 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. These Penalty Notices require the recipient to pay a fine, of £120 per child but reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. The procedures and consequences outlined above are applied equally to persistent lateness. Non-payment of these fines will result in the case being presented at the Magistrates Court.

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 Attendance Manager before leaving for the appointment and should sign back in at Attendance Manager 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 will be requested by the Attendance Manager as proof of illness, this could be an appointment card or photocopy of a prescription or box of medication.

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/Connexions Service/FE provider

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

Exclusions

Walderslade Girls' School aims not to externally exclude students and will always attempt to exclude internally within the Inclusion Exclusion room in preference to an external exclusion. Internal Exclusion has been developed as part of the Behaviour and Conduct Policy as a strategy to avoid the need for external exclusions which are detrimental to the education of our students. We hope that parents/carers and students will realise that this provision has been put into place to reduce interruptions to learning.

Fixed Term Exclusions

In situations where exclusion is the only option, a student excluded for a fixed term remains on roll and the absence is recorded accordingly. Parents and carers have a duty to ensure that their child is not present in a public place within school hours during the first 5 days of exclusion. Under the regulations parents and carers may be prosecuted or receive a penalty notice from the local authority if the child 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 pupil's exclusion until the expiry of their exclusion students will be required to attend another school provision. Arrangements for this will be made by Walderslade Girls' School. From this 6th day of exclusion attendance is shown as a 'B' meaning educated off site. Non attendance at the alternative provision will be unauthorised.

Permanent Exclusions

Permanent 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 permanent exclusion
- (ii) the independent appeal panel does not uphold the permanent 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 be in their tutor room in time for registration at 08.20. Students who arrive after 8.30 will be marked 'late.' Those who arrive after 9.40 will be marked as Unauthorised and will affect their attendance figure.

Afternoon

For the PM session students will register in lessons at the start of period 5 at 1.20pm.

Attendance and punctuality will be monitored and individuals causing concern will be supported by the Attendance and pastoral teams. Further issues will be reported to the AASSA.

If a student is late for 11-30 minutes over a week, they will receive a 30 minute Whole School detention, and if they total over 30 minutes, they will receive a 60 minute Whole School detention. This is outlined in our Behaviour and Conduct Policy 2016.

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 Manager who will monitor these children lesson by lesson and keep appropriate staff and parents fully informed.

Rewards and Incentives

- 25 House Points for each complete terms attendance
- 100 House Points for a complete Academic Year

- 100% Club prize (trip/lunch)
- Year Group competitions
- Tutor Group certificates

Reduced timetables

As part of a Pastoral Support Plan (PSP) 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 a member or SLT, SENCO, or Head of Year in conjunction with the students' parents or carer.

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. A student who is pregnant is entitled to 18 calendar weeks' authorised absence to cover the time immediately before and after the birth of the child. If health allows the student should return to school with minimum interruption. After the maximum length of authorised absence (18 weeks) the school should follow normal guidelines on non-attendance. Absence for ante-natal classes and if the baby is ill, should be classified as 'authorised'.

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 requires parents and carers to secure education of their children of compulsory age either by regular school attendance or otherwise. Parents and carers of teenage parents are obliged therefore to ensure their child attends the provision arranged by the school.

This policy is reviewed on a two year cycle.