



Watford Grammar School for Girls

# Attendance Policy

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## 1. Aims and Principles

### **As a school we aim to:**

Maintain an attendance rate of a minimum of 97%  
Maintain parents' and pupils' awareness of the importance of regular attendance  
Maintain good timekeeping and punctuality

### **Good attendance is important because:**

Statistics show a direct link between underachievement and poor attendance  
Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically  
Regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with  
Regular attenders find learning more satisfying  
Regular attenders settle into school more easily

## 2. Framework

This policy has been devised in accordance with the following legislation and guidance:

- School Attendance: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities. November 2016.  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>

### **3. Processes and Procedures**

#### **3.1 Encouraging good attendance.**

**Each pupil will be encouraged to attend school every day and to be punctual to lessons:**

- By staff acting as good role models through their attendance and punctuality
- Reward certificates for students achieving 100% attendance. 100% attendance means no absences except for the following reasons:
  - Up to 3 days religious holiday
  - Sporting & Educational activities
- Certificates will be awarded on a termly basis. However, if by the end of the Summer Term a girl has achieved 100% for the full school year, she will receive a certificate in the main school Prize-Giving.
  - One full year equals a bronze certificate
  - Two equals silver
  - Three equals gold
  - Four equals platinum
  - Five equals diamond
- Presentations are made to parents about the value of full attendance at the Year 7 Induction and Year 12 Induction

#### **3.2 Procedures for parents/carers in the case of absence of their child**

The school has a dedicated absence reporting line so that parents can inform the school when their daughter is not able to attend school. Parents are requested to call or email as early as possible on each day that the pupil does not attend, not just on the first day. If parents have done this on each day, there is no need for them to write a note when their daughter returns to school. (Please ring 01923 442788 or email [absence@watfordgirls.herts.sch.uk](mailto:absence@watfordgirls.herts.sch.uk))

#### **3.3 The monitoring of attendance by the school**

- Attendance Officer provides weekly reports to Heads of Year of lates and absences
- Heads of Year and form tutors identify students whose attendance begins to fall below 95%
- Heads of Year communicate with parents to highlight concerns when attendance falls below 95%
- If attendance of a pupil fall below 90% the Hertfordshire County Council has defined this as persistent absence. At this point the Head of Year may call a meeting with the parents and put an action plan in place to improve attendance.

Individual students may be exempt from the above procedures due to exceptional circumstances which are known to the school.

### **3.4 Action to encourage good attendance**

#### **Parents will be encouraged to support the school by:**

- Ensuring their child attends school regularly. Absence should only happen when the child is significantly ill and therefore unfit to attend school, or if there is an unavoidable/unforeseen reason or circumstance which is causing a difficulty/period of difficulty
- Telephoning or emailing on the first morning of any absence to give the reason and tell us when the child is likely to return to school. To continue to contact the school on each day of absence.
- Arranging all non-emergency medical appointments out of school hours or during school holidays
- Frequent absence due to illness must be supported by medical evidence.
- Providing appropriate medication to support their daughters attendance at school.
- Keeping us updated by telephone or letter if the child has any extended period of absence
- Making sure the school always has current contact numbers of parents; this includes all telephone numbers, child minders and emergency contact details

#### **The school shall:**

- Follow up unexplained absences by phone calls, emails and letters as necessary
- Remind parents of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality in our letters, the school prospectus, open evenings and, reports.
- Publish our attendance rate in the school website and the Governing Body's Annual Report.
- Acknowledge and reward good attendance
- Publish the child's attendance rate on her school report
- Let parents know if the school has concerns regarding a child's attendance and punctuality
- If we continue to have concerns, we will make a referral to the Local Authority School Attendance Officer, who visits the school regularly to review and support attendance and punctuality issues

### **3.5 Authorised Absence**

Some absences are allowed by law and are known as "authorised absences". For example: if a child is ill, family bereavement, religious observance.

### **3.6 Unauthorised Absence**

There are times when children are absent for reasons, which are not permitted by law. These are known as "unauthorised absences". Some examples of unauthorised absence include:

- Parent's illness
- Caring for a younger sibling
- Waiting for a delivery
- Taking or collecting a relative to/from the airport
- Going for a family day out
- Sleeping in after a late night
- To celebrate a birthday
- Term time holiday/Cheap flights

Where there is no explanation for an absence or where the explanation or reason for the absence is considered unsatisfactory absence will be recorded as 'unauthorised'. Unauthorised Absences have to

be reported to the Local Authority. The School Attendance Service may contact the parent where unauthorised absence continues to be a problem. **Unauthorised absence could result in a Fixed Penalty Fine or other legal action.**

### 3.7 Exceptional Leave - Term Time Leave of Absence

The school is always concerned about the amount of school time pupils miss as a result of term time leave. There is **no entitlement** to time off during term time. Leave of absence is only granted in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Headteacher in accordance with the school policy as agreed by the governing body.

**Only in an exceptional circumstance will term time leave be allowed. Parents/Carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to apply in writing to the Headmistress well in advance and before booking tickets or making travel arrangements.**

### 3.8 Sixth Form

**Driving Lessons** Sixth Form pupils may apply to use non lesson time during the school day for driving lessons. Parents can apply in writing to the Head of Year, detailing the name of the driving school and the times of the lessons. The school may refuse permission if there are ongoing concerns regarding the progress or attendance of the pupil.

On the day and time of the driving lesson the pupil must sign out and in at the school office. The absence will be recorded as a 'B' (see Appendix 1).

### 3.9 Punctuality

It is important for pupils to arrive punctually at school, as the first part of the school day is used to give out instructions or organise schoolwork for the rest that day. It is also a time for pupils to settle down by reading or another quiet activity so they are ready for lessons immediately after registration.

- All lateness is recorded daily. The number of minutes late and the reason for lateness if known will also be recorded. This information can be made available to the courts in the form of a report, should a prosecution be the outcome of repeated lateness.
- Pupils must be in their Form Room by 8.40 to be ready for registration at 8.45 am.
- Late arrivals are disruptive to the whole class.
- Arrival after 9am, will be marked as unauthorised absence code 'U' in line with the DCFS guidance. This is effectively an absence. Pupils who arrive after 9am must report to the school office and give a reason for their lateness.
- Arrival between 8.45 and 9.00 is a Late to school. Pupils who arrive when the Form is still in the Form room may register directly with the Form Tutor, who will mark this as a 'L'. Pupils who arrive when the Form has left for assembly, must sign in at the school office and this will be marked with a 'L'.
- Pupils are also expected to arrive promptly to Afternoon Registration. Pupils who arrive after the register has been taken will be marked with an 'L'.
- Punctuality will be monitored by the Form Tutor and HOY. Frequent lateness will be challenged by the Form tutor, who will work with the pupil and family to resolve causes of lateness. The HOY will become involved in cases of persistent lateness or if there are Safeguarding concerns. This may then be referred to the Designated Safeguarding Person (DSP) in school.
- Pupils are expected to arrive to lessons promptly. Pupils who arrive late may also be marked with an 'L'. If pupil is more than 5 mins late then the number of minutes should be recorded. All lateness will be challenged by the subject teacher. If this becomes frequent or persistent, then this should be referred to the HOY or HOD.

- **If term time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised and you may be liable for a fixed-penalty fine or other legal action and in certain instances the child may also lose their school place.**

Please remember that absence for whatever reason disadvantages a pupil by creating gaps in her learning. A good understanding of the work and good progress can only take place when the pupil is in the classroom regularly and on time.

### 3.10 Leavers

The school will only remove a pupil from the register on the prescribed in regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended by the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016).

Regulation 12(6) states

‘Where the name of a pupil is to be deleted from the admission register, the proprietor must make a return to the local authority for that pupil as soon as the ground for their deletion under regulation 8 is met in relation to that pupil, and in any event no later than the time at which the pupil’s name is deleted from the register.

Regulation 12(7) details the information schools must include in the return, namely

- the full name of the pupil;
- the full name and address of any parent with whom the pupil normally resides;
- at least one telephone number at which any parent with whom the pupil normally resides can be contacted in an emergency;
- the particulars specified pursuant to regulation 5(1)(ca) if applicable;\* (*see below*)
- the particulars specified pursuant to regulation 5(1)(g) if applicable;\*\* (*see below*)
- the ground under regulation 8 upon which their name is to be deleted from the admission register**

\*5(1)(ca) – ‘where a parent of the pupil notifies the proprietor of the school or a person authorised by the proprietor of the school that the pupil will normally reside with a parent at a specified other address in the future, whether in addition to or instead of the address at which the pupil currently normally resides, the following information must be provided to the school:-

- the full name of the parent with whom the pupil will newly normally reside,
- the specified other address, and
- the date from which it is expected the child will normally reside there, where it is reasonably practicable for the proprietor to obtain that information’

\*\*5(1)(g) – ‘where a parent of the pupil notifies the proprietor or a person authorised by the proprietor of the school that the pupil –

- is also registered at another school; or
- will be attending a specified other school in the future,

the name of that other school and the first date on which the pupil attended or is due to attend that school, where it is reasonably practicable for the proprietor to obtain that information’

If a pupil leaves and we do not have information, about where they have gone, then the child is considered to be a ‘Child Missing Education’. This means that the Local Authority has a legal duty to

carry out investigations, which will include liaising with Children's Services (formerly Social Services), the Police and other agencies, to try and locate the child.

### **3.11 Legal Note**

Parents have a legal duty to ensure the regular and full time attendance at school of registered pupils (Education Act 1996). This policy is based on the law and on Best Practice guidance produced by the DCSF and the Local Authority. The School Attendance Service aims to work with schools and families to promote good attendance and avoid legal action. However in some cases, parents are prosecuted (taken to court) or have to pay a Fixed Penalty (fine) if these absences continue.

### **3.12 Fixed Penalty Notice**

The school is empowered to issue fixed penalty notices to the parents or guardians of pupils whose attendance falls within the following criteria:

- Penalty notices may only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence
- The pupil must have at least 15 sessions (half days) unauthorised absence in the current and/or previous term
- The parents have been sent a formal warning.
- The Attendance Improvement Officer considers that issuing a penalty notice could avoid further absence
- Issuing a penalty notice does not conflict with any other legal action being taken
- A maximum of two separate penalty notices will be issued to a parent within any twelve month period
- Penalty notices will be issued for pupils of compulsory school age, up to the end of the spring term of year 11

### **3.13 Payment of penalty notices**

- The amount payable is £60 (per parent) if paid within 21 days or £120 (per parent) if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt of the notice.
- Separate notices are issued to each parent in respect of each child.
- Penalty notices are sent by first class post and are deemed to have been received on the second day after posting.
- Arrangements for payment are detailed on the penalty notice and payment by cheque, Parentpay or debit/credit card is accepted.

## Absence and Attendance Codes

The national codes enable schools to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with the regulations. They are also used for collecting statistics through the School Census System. The data helps schools, local authorities and the Government to gain a greater understanding of the level of, and the reasons for, absence. The codes are:

### Present at School

Pupils must not be marked present if they were not in school during registration. If a pupil were to leave the school premises after registration they would still be counted as present for statistical purposes.

**Registration Code / \:** Present in school / = am \ = pm

### Present in school during registration.

#### **Code L: Late arrival before the register has closed**

Schools should have a policy on how long registers should be kept open; this should be for a reasonable length of time but not that registers are to be kept open for the whole session. A pupil arriving after the register has closed should be marked absent with code U, or with another absence code if that is more appropriate.

### Present at an Approved Off-Site Educational Activity

An approved educational activity is where a pupil is taking part in supervised educational activity such as field trips, educational visits, work experience or alternative provision. Pupils can only be recorded as receiving off-site educational activity if the activity meets the requirements prescribed in regulation 6(4) of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. The activity must be of an educational nature approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school. The activity must take place during the session for which the mark is recorded.

### Attendance codes for when pupils are present at approved off-site educational activity are as follows:

#### **Code B: Off-site educational activity**

This code should be used when pupils are present at an off-site educational activity that has been approved by the school. Ultimately schools are responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils educated off-site. Therefore by using code B, schools are certifying that the education is supervised and measures have been taken to safeguard pupils. This code should not be used for any unsupervised educational activity or where a pupil is at home doing school work. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the provider of the alternative activity notifies the school of any absences by individual pupils. The school should record the pupil's absence using the relevant absence code.

#### **Consortia Schools**

Pupils attending consortia schools as part of their course only need to be placed on the registers of their 'main' school rather than on all of the schools they attend. They should be treated as guest pupils at the other consortia schools. The consortia schools however, must ensure they have suitable systems in place for monitoring and reporting the attendance and absence of the pupils involved, which must be shared with the 'main' school.

#### **Code D: Dual Registered - at another educational establishment**

This code is not counted as a possible attendance in the School Census. The law allows for dual registration of pupils at more than one school. This code is used to indicate that the pupil was not expected to attend the session in question because they were scheduled to attend the other school at which they are registered.

The main examples of dual registration are pupils who are attending a pupil referral unit, a hospital school or a special school on a temporary basis. It can also be used when the pupil is known to be registered at another school during the session in question.

Each school should only record the pupil's attendance and absence for those sessions that the pupil is scheduled to attend their school. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby all unexplained and unexpected absence is followed up in a timely manner.

**Code J: At an interview with prospective employers, or another educational establishment**

This code should be used to record time spent in interviews with prospective employers or another educational establishment. Schools should be satisfied that the interview is linked to employment prospects, further education or transfer to another educational establishment.

**Code P: Participating in a supervised sporting activity**

This code should be used to record the sessions when a pupil is taking part in a sporting activity that has been approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school.

**Code V: Educational visit or trip**

This code should be used for attendance at an organised trip or visit, including residential trips organised by the school, or attendance at a supervised trip of a strictly educational nature arranged by an organisation approved by the school.

**Code W: Work experience**

Work experience is for pupils in the final two years of compulsory education. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the work experience placement provider notifies the school of any absences by individual pupils. Any absence should be recorded using the relevant code.

### **Authorised Absence from School**

'Authorised absence' means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

#### **Absence codes when pupils are not present in school are as follows:**

**Code C: Leave of absence authorised by the school**

Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. Schools should consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

**Code E: Excluded but no alternative provision made**

If no alternative provision is made for a pupil to continue their education whilst they are excluded but still on the admission register, they should be marked absent in the attendance register using Code E. Alternative provision must be arranged for each excluded pupil from the sixth consecutive day of any fixed period or permanent exclusion. Where alternative provision is made they should be marked using the appropriate attendance code.

**Code H: Holiday authorised by the school**

Head teachers should not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The application must be made in advance and the head teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion.

**Code I: Illness (not medical or dental appointments)**

Schools should advise parents to notify them on the first day the child is unable to attend due to illness. Schools should authorise absences due to illness unless they have genuine cause for concern about the veracity of an illness. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, schools can request parents to provide medical evidence to support illness. Schools can record the absence as unauthorised if not satisfied of the authenticity of the illness but should advise parents of their intention. Schools are advised not to request medical evidence unnecessarily. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc. rather than doctors' notes.

**Code M: Medical or dental appointments**

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence. Schools should, however, encourage parents to make appointments out of school hours. Where this is not possible, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.

### **Code R: Religious observance**

Schools must treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Where necessary, schools should seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.

### **Code S: Study leave**

Schools must record study leave as authorised absence. Study leave should be used sparingly and only granted to Year 11 pupils during public examinations. Provision should still be made available for those pupils who want to continue to come into school to revise.

### **Code T: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence**

A number of different groups are covered by the generic term Traveller – Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers.

This code should be used when Traveller families are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision. It should not be used for any other types of absence by these groups.

To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children it is expected that the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling and be dual registered at that school and the main school. Children from these groups whose families do not travel are expected to register at a school and attend as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly once registered at a school.

### **Unauthorised Absence from School**

Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence. Absence codes are as follows:

### **Code G: Holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of the period determined by the head teacher.**

If a school does not authorise a leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday but the parents still take the child out of school, or the child is kept away for longer than was agreed, the absence is unauthorised. The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If the parents did not apply for leave of absence in advance, the absence must be recorded as unauthorised.

### **Code N: Reason for absence not yet provided**

Schools should follow up all unexplained and unexpected absences in a timely manner. Every effort should be made to establish the reason for a pupil's absence. When the reason for the pupil's absence has been established the register should be amended. This code should not be left on a pupil's attendance record indefinitely; if no reason for absence is provided after a reasonable amount of time it should be replaced with code O (absent from school without authorisation).

### **Code O: Absent from school without authorisation**

If the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence they should record it as unauthorised.

### **Code U: Arrived in school after registration closed**

Schools should actively discourage late arrival, be alert to patterns of late arrival and seek an explanation from the parent.

## **Administrative Codes**

The following codes are not counted as a possible attendance in the School Census:

### **Code X: Not required to be in school**

This code is used to record sessions that non-compulsory school age children are not expected to attend.

### **Code Y: Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances**

This code can be used where a pupil is unable to attend because:

- The school site, or part of it, is closed due to an unavoidable cause; or
- The transport provided by the school or a local authority is not available and where the pupil's home is not within walking distance; or

- A local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the pupil from attending school.

This code can also be used where a pupil is unable to attend because:

- The pupil is in custody; detained for a period of less than four months. If the school has evidence from the place of custody that the pupil is attending educational activities then they can record those sessions as code B (present at approved educational activity).

This code is collected in the School Census for statistical purposes.

**Code Z: Pupil not on admission register**

This code is available to enable schools to set up registers in advance of pupils joining the school to ease administration burdens. Schools must put pupils on the admission register from the first day that the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school.

**Code #: Planned whole or partial school closure**

This code should be used for whole or partial school closures that are known or planned in advance such as: between terms; half terms; occasional days (for example, bank holidays); weekends (where it is required by the management information system); up to five non-educational days to be used for curriculum planning/training; and use of schools as polling stations.

**Different Term Dates for Different Pupils**

Schools and local authorities can agree to set different term dates for different year groups – e.g. for ‘staggered starts’ or ‘induction days’. Code # can be used to record the year group(s) that is not due to attend. This is only acceptable where the school ensures that those pupils not attending on that day are still offered a full education over the school year.