Attendance policy

Approved by:	Julie Smith	Date: April 2024
Last reviewed on:	April 2024	
Next review due by:	April 2025	

'Every child deserves to be the best they can be'

Contents

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1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance

- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence

- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled

- Acting early to address patterns of absence

- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons

We believe that good attendance is a clear indicator that pupils are happy in the school environment and subscribe to its learning culture. The school recognises that regular attendance is not just a legal requirement but contributes to raising educational standards. Our expectations for attendance are therefore in the best interests of the child and we expect and appreciate parental support to work towards 100% attendance.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the working together to improve school attendance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of The Education Act 1996

- Part 3 of The Education Act 2002

- Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006

- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)

- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is the Assistant Headteacher, and they are responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Ensuring that all absences are explained
- Contacting Social Workers for children who have an allocated social worker eg: LAC/CIN/CP where there is a concern about their attendance or absence
- Instigating the CME procedures where no contact can be made with parents/carers or child
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

3.4 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a twice-daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office by 9.30am and 12.30pm.

3.5 School office staff

School office staff will:

- Take calls from parents [and pupils] about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents [and pupils] to the Assistant Headteacher in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance.
- Call parents to establish the reason for an absence when a pupil has not arrived in school by 9.20am when no other explanation has been received.
- Provide parents with forms to request authorization for planned absence
- Request written confirmation of pupils' appointments where they are required to be absent from school.

3.6 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9.00am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Provide evidence of appointments made during the school day

3.7 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time (9.00am),and remain in school until the end of the school day (3.00pm)

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment

- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 9.00am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 9.05am and will be kept open until 09.30am. The register for the second session will be taken at 12.30pm and will be kept open until 12.45pm.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9.00am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office (see also section 7).

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. Parents/carers should call the school office and advise them of the appointment time and arrangements for the pupil to be collected and returned to school.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

In the large majority of cases Oakland School pupils are transported to school on Local Authority transport or by their parents. Therefore, their lateness will most often be out of their control. Where minibuses arrive late to collect a pupil from home the parent/carer in the first case should contact the transport team to advise them and discuss what can be done.

Where a pupil is regularly late this can cause them distress and disruption to the beginning of their day. The Deputy Head will discuss any regular lateness with parents/carers and pupils and aim to provide support to resolve the underlying issue.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may contact:

    o   the Single Point of Access (SPoA) on 0118 937 3641 for a pupil who lives in Reading, or

    o   the Contact Advice and Assessment Service (CAAS) on 01635 503090 for a pupil living in West Berkshire, or

    o   the police on 999 if there is reason to believe that the pupil is in immediate danger or urgent action is needed

- Identify whether the absence is approved or not

- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session

- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without reasonable explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels.

Termly written reports will include information about attendance and absence. Parents will be provided with an annual report which will identify long-term attendance patterns. All pupils will have an annual EHCP review during the year and attendance data will be shared before the meeting and discussed in the meeting.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)

- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart. Where a religious observance is for one day, extra days for festivities will not be authorised.

    Interviews – an interview for a job or college place confirmed by letter of invitation will be authorised. Absence for interview during Year 6, 11 and 13 for the above purposes will be recorded as 'approved educational activity'.

- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

- Suspension – a child who has been suspended for a fixed period remains on school roll and the absence will be treated as authorised. In the case of a permanent exclusion, the pupil's name will be removed from the school roll on the first school day on which

- The independent appeal panel upholds the permanent exclusion
- The independent appeal panel does not uphold the permanent exclusion but does not direct re-instatement
- The prescribed period for lodging an appeal has expired and the parent has not lodged an appeal
- The parent has, before the expiry of the prescribed period, advised the LA in wiritng that they do not intend to appeal.

As a school, we are not prepared to accept our children missing out on their education due to absence during term time. Children are at school for 190 days in the year. That leaves 175 days for holidays and other trips.

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. Term time holidays will not be authorised unless there are exceptional circumstances which might justify it.

What are exceptional circumstances?

It is the decision of the Headteacher as to what might constitute exceptional circumstances and each request for term time leave will be considered on an individual basis.

Exceptional leave is NOT:

- Availability of cheap flights and/or holidays and/or desired accommodation
- Parent/carer work commitments
- Poor weather experienced during school holiday periods
- Overlap with the beginning or end of term, half term.

Exceptional circumstances MAY be:

- Serious illness of Grandparent or other close relative – and you must leave in an emergency
- Significant trauma in the family recently and a holiday will benefit the child
- A one-off, never to be repeated occasion that can only happen at that time, eg family wedding/funeral.

How to apply for special leave during term time

Please complete the Application for Leave of Absence during Term Time form or ask one of the office staff for a copy. This must be done as soon as it is anticipated and where possible 2 weeks before the absence. The Headteacher will reply within 5 working days providing reasons and outlining the potential consequences, should the family still decide to travel.

If the Headteacher does not permit the absence and the pupil goes on holiday, the absence will be counted as unauthorised.

5.2 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission

- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

- Termly 100% attendance tea with the Headteacher

- Re-enforce attendance expectations continually

- Emphasise the impact of attendance on attainment

- Promote to pupils the next lesson and the sequence of learning to motivate them to be in the classroom

- Apply rewards and sanctions consistently

- Follow up on reasons for absence or lateness with pupils and identify barriers and reasons

- Develop action plans to remove barriers

- Develop good relationships with parents and carers to improve attendance

- Consider the needs and vulnerabilities of pupils

- Review attendance half-termly and maintain focus on lowest attending pupils

- Welcome pupils back from absence

- Provide good support to catch up, bridge gaps and build confidence

- Provide good pastoral support including support to resolve transport difficulties, discuss and rehearse wake-up routines, and support for emotional wellbeing

- Secure support from other professionals including social workers and health professionals if appropriate

7. Attendance monitoring

7.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level in order to identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern.

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

7.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to [class teachers/form tutors], and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Where a pupil's attendance has dropped below 95% in a school year, primarily due to sickness absence, they will have been absent for 10 school days. When attendance drops below 95% parents may not be aware, in which case we will inform the parents at the earliest opportunity.

Persistent absence is defined as a pupil missing 10% or more of school, and severe absence is defined as a pupil missing 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Review individual cases of concern on a weekly basis
- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Review attendance each term and monitor against a 'trigger framework'

  Term 1 – illness absences exceed 4 days

  Term 2 – illness absences exceed 7 days cumulative

  Term 3 – illness absences exceed 10 days cumulative

- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or have reached the trigger framework thresholds, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance
- Propose an Early Help assessment
- Meet with pupil, Teacher and Deputy Headteacher to understand barriers to attendance
- Inform Local Authority that attendance is causing concern

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by Julie Smith/Chair of Governors. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
****	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day