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# Attendance & Absence Policy

Spring 2017 – Spring 2018

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# Attendance Policy

## AIMS

There is a clear link between pupils' achievement and their level of attendance at school. The governors and staff, alongside the LA, firmly believe that all pupils benefit from full attendance. We want all pupils to achieve the very best they can and for this they need to be in school daily.

- To this end we will do all we can to encourage parents/carers to ensure that the children in their care achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent full attendance are identified and acted on promptly.
- The School will provide the attendance record of each child at parent consultation meetings during the year and provide a Certification of Registration for the school academic year with each child's annual report.

## EXPECTATIONS

Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school. *DfE Advice on school attendance (updated 4 June 2013)*

### The Government expects schools and local authorities to:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; and,
- Act early to address patterns of absence.
- Support parents in performing their legal duty, by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.
- Encourage all pupils to be punctual to their lessons.
- Meet for at least 380 sessions or 190 days during any school year to educate their pupils.

### The School expectations pupils to:

- Attend school regularly
- Arrive on time and appropriately prepared for the day

### The School expects parents and carers to:

- Ensure their children attend school regularly and on time.
- Ensure they contact school as soon as is reasonably practical on the first day of absence whenever their child is unable to attend school.
- Ensure their children arrive in school well prepared for the school day and to check that they have done their homework.
- Contact the school in confidence whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child away from school.

### The School will ensure:

- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance.
- Early contact with parents when a pupil fails to attend without providing good reason – parents will be telephoned by the school administrator by 9:30am.
- Immediate action is taken on any problem notified to us.
- All staff members contribute to improving and maintaining pupil attendance and to take ownership of attendance as a whole school responsibility.
- Regular monitoring of attendance by the Leadership Team.
- A referral of specific issues to supporting agencies where appropriate.
- School assemblies are used to reinforce the value of education and the need for regular school attendance and punctuality.

## Contents of Attendance Register

Registration is a legal requirement. By law, registers have to be marked twice daily and constitute a legal document. KS2 morning register is taken at 8.40-8.50am, KS1/EYFS 8.50 – 9:20; Afternoon Register is taken at 1.00-1.05pm. Registration details must be accurately kept, especially as they are primary evidence in court for cases for poor attendance and ensure correct tracking of pupils for safeguarding purposes.

The attendance register must be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and again at the start of the afternoon session. On each occasion they must record whether every pupil is:

- Present;
- Attending an approved educational activity;
- Absent; or
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

The School should follow up any absences to:

- Ascertain the reason;
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken;

- Identify whether the absence is approved or not; and
- Identify the correct code to use before entering it on to the school's electronic register or management information system which is used to download data to the School Census.

## Absence and Attendance Codes

The national codes are used 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 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**

**Registers are kept open for 30 minutes;** 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, sporting activities or alternative provision.

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.

### Authorised Absence

An absence can be authorised by a school either before or after it occurs. There are three main categories of authorised absence:

- When a pupil is prevented from attending by sickness
- A day set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong
- When no suitable transport is available and the school is not within walking distance (2 miles for primary pupils, 3 miles for secondary pupils).

Other categories of authorised absence include:

- Medical or dental appointments, by necessity made in school time
- Exclusions of a fixed-term
- Domestic circumstances that could include death of a close relative, a house fire or other exceptional traumatic event
- Exceptional circumstances

## Unauthorised Absence from School

Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence. Absence codes are as given on page 21.

## SCHOOL PROCEDURES

Registration is from 8.40-8.50am KS2, KS1/EYFS 8.50 – 9:20

Pupils will not be marked present if they were not in school during registration. The school will follow DfE guidelines and close the register to pupils 30 minutes after the register was taken.

If a pupil were to leave the school premises after registration they will still be counted as present for statistical purposes.

For health and safety, and safeguarding reasons, the school needs to be aware of where pupils are, particularly those leaving or arriving on the premises during a session. In these circumstances, pupils will be required to sign in and out as they come and go, to record that a pupil has left the school premises during the session.

The afternoon registration will take place at the start of the session at 1.00pm.

### Marking the Register

Every pupil's attendance should be recorded by the end of the registration period. Leaving a pupil unmarked is not permissible. The school must have an effective system of recording pupils who arrive late after the register has been returned to the office. Such late marks must be added to the OMR Registers.

Accuracy in both aspects is necessary because:

- It is a legal responsibility
- It meets the requirements of fire and safeguarding regulations.

### Amending the Register

Every amendment made to the attendance register must include: the original entry; the amended entry; the reason for the amendment; the date on which the amendment was made; and the name and position of the person who made the amendment.

### Preservation of the Admission Register and Attendance Register

Every entry in the attendance register must be preserved for a period of three years after the date on which the entry was made.

## SUPPORT FOR ATTENDANCE

Attendance will be encouraged in a number of ways:

- At the end of the school year parents are sent attendance reports.
- Pupils with attendance difficulties are monitored and reports made to parents.

### **Late arrival (after registration closed)**

Lateness is often an indication of more serious problems, but can also be merely the result of poor time management. Punctuality is monitored and followed up where concerns are identified.

The gates are locked at 9.00 am and any latecomers are admitted into reception to sign the late book.

The school actively encourages punctuality and is alert to patterns of late arrival, which could provide grounds for prosecution.

Parents need to be kept informed if punctuality is a problem as often they may be unaware of this, having themselves left home before their child is expected to go to school.

Parents will be written to where punctuality is a concern and reminded of their parental responsibility and the potential damage caused by lateness. Such letters will require a response from parents to explain the reasons for lateness. Parental responsibility for lateness will be stressed in the majority of cases.

If a pupil is late due to exceptional circumstances, no action will be taken. If a pupil is frequently late with the same or similar explanation, school will speak to parents to identify any issues that are causing the pupil to arrive late at school. If the pupil still arrives late, the school may decide not to authorise the late arrival and enter an unauthorised late mark 'U'.

In circumstances such as bad weather or public transport difficulties, the school may keep the register open for a longer period.

### **Responding to non-attendance**

Only the school can authorise absence, on the basis of information provided by parents/carers. Where explanations are not felt to be acceptable, the absence will remain unauthorised and the parents/carers informed.

If pupils are absent without their parents/carers' knowledge this is a cause for concern as they may be putting themselves at risk and parents will be contacted immediately.

In all cases of absence parents/carers should contact school by 9.10 am KS2, 9.20am KS1, to allow the school to record the absence and if appropriate authorise it. Parents/carers should give an indication of the probable length of absence if likely to be longer than one day. If the explanation for absence is not accepted as justifiable, the absence will be marked as unauthorised and the parents/carers informed.

Where there has been no contact from parents/carers and the child remains absent without explanation, the school administrator will make contact with parents/carers of pupils to ask the reason for absence. In the first instance contact will be by phone, but where parents/carers cannot be contacted this will be followed up in writing. For this reason parents/carers must inform the school immediately if their contact details change.

If a pupil is missing from school for some days and cannot be traced then the school will contact the OCC Safeguarding Team.

### **Where attendance gives rise for concern**

Pupils whose attendance falls below 90% will be monitored by the school and discussed with parents where appropriate. If there is no improvement, a referral may be made to the Attendance and Engagement Team.

Pupils whose attendance falls below 90% and where much of the absence is unauthorised (truancy) will be referred for action by the Attendance and Engagement Team according to the process outlined above.

Missing pupils will be referred to Attendance and Engagement Team once school staff have tried and failed to contact parents/carers.

### **Family holidays during term time**

If pupils do not attend school, they will not achieve or reach their maximum potential. The Government's agenda has shifted away from concentrating simply on unauthorised absence to focusing on attendance overall. Achieving high attendance is seen as key to achieving the challenging achievement targets towards which the school is working.

Amendments to government legislation regarding family holidays and extended leave from school come into force on 1 September 2013. The amendments make it clear that Headteacher's may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

If parents feel that there are exceptional circumstances for their child's absence, they must put their request in writing at least two weeks before the event. Absence will only be authorised if it has been agreed prior to the absence being taken.

When assessing absence requests, the school will consider the:

- Time of year proposed for absence.
- Motive and purpose of the absence.
- Duration of the absence and its impact on continuity of learning.
- Circumstances of the family request.
- Rarity of this event during the child's school career.
- Attendance pattern of the child.

In extenuating circumstances, absence can be requested at least one calendar month before the event.

An absence request will be considered by the Headteacher/Governors and parents / carers informed by letter of the outcome.

A letter will accompany the absence request form outlining the legal responsibilities of parents and carers.

Absence requests will only be considered if a child's/children's attendance is at least 93% and there are extenuating circumstances.

The school can only agree to absence of up to 10 days if the school believes there are special circumstances which warrant it.

Pupils who fail to return to school within 10 days of the end of extended leave of absence may be removed from the school roll if both the school and LA fail to locate them and they do not have good reason to be absent.

### **Missing registration through illness**

Missing registration through illness is an authorised absence.

If a pupil is present for registration but returns home because of illness, no absence will be recorded for that session. The school will keep a record of pupils leaving or returning to site in case of an emergency.

If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, the school can record the absence as unauthorised absence but will advise parents of the School's intention. The school can request that parents provide medical evidence to support absence on the grounds of illness and may request signed parental consent to contact their GP.

### **Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment**

Parents and pupils are encouraged to make appointments out of school hours. Sight of an appointment card may be requested if a pupil is an irregular attender.

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is authorised absence.

If a pupil is present for registration but has a medical appointment later, no absence will be recorded for that session. The School will keep a record of pupils leaving or returning to site in case of an emergency.

Medical appointments include:

- Attendance at a GP's surgery
- Attendance at a dentist's surgery
- Hospital appointments (not a stay in hospital).

### **Unauthorised absence**

Examples:

- Pupil's/parent's/sibling's/relative's birthday
- Shopping
- Having their hair cut
- Special treat
- 'Couldn't get up'
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes.

## 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.

To help ensure continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. The School cannot remove a Traveller child from the School roll while they are travelling if it is the base school.

If the pupil's family are known to be travelling but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision (at a school or other provider), the absence should be authorised.

Children from 'traveller' families are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of requirements to attend school. However, there is a defence available to traveller families if prosecuted for non-attendance provided that the child has attended a school for at least 200 sessions in the 12 months ending when legal proceedings are started.

## Extended visits to the country of family origin during term time

It is recognised that extended visits to the country of family origin provide important opportunities to reaffirm family, linguistic and cultural identities. As such they can be positive personal and educational experiences. At the same time there is evidence to indicate that visits, resulting in significant absence from school during term time, are disruptive to the pupil's education and have a negative impact on attainment. As a school we follow Oxfordshire's Policy on Extended **Visits to Country of Origin**.

### Key Elements of Oxfordshire's Policy on Extended Visits to Country of Origin

Parents are encouraged to arrange visits to their country of family origin during school holiday periods. An extended period of absence may be granted, at the discretion of the school, for a **maximum period of 4 weeks in term time**.

Only one such absence should be granted in the primary phase and one in the secondary phase of a child's education.

A home/school contract, stating the date of return must be agreed and signed by the parent and the head teacher. The school and the parent(s) should retain a copy of the contract.

Failure to agree a home/school contract, or non-return by agreed date places the child at risk of losing his/her school place.

National Curriculum Assessments take place in May for pupils in Years 2 and 6. Parents should be advised not to take their children on extended visits in these years, until after examinations have taken place.

In all normal circumstances, requests for extended absence should be made to the school well in advance. In exceptional circumstances, for example family bereavement, families are still required to contact the school to request leave of absence. N.B Once the period agreed has expired, and that no extension to that period has been agreed, the LA Service will, after reasonable enquiry, advise schools of options available.

## PARENTING ORDER, PARENTING CONTRACTS AND PENALTY NOTICES

Parenting contracts, parenting orders and penalty notices are interventions available to promote better school attendance. Good attendance is essential to children's educational prospects.

Parenting contracts, parenting orders and penalty notices for irregular attendance apply only to pupils of compulsory school age who are registered at a school. Penalty notices for parents of pupils found in a public place during school hours after being excluded also apply only to children of compulsory school age who are registered at a school.

Parents are responsible for making sure that their children of compulsory school age receive a suitable full-time education. Local authorities also have other powers to enforce school attendance where this becomes problematic, including the power to prosecute parents who fail to comply with a school attendance order or fail to ensure their child's regular attendance at school.

A child reaches compulsory school age on or after their fifth birthday. If they turn 5 between 1 January and 31 March they are of compulsory school age on 31 March; if they turn 5 between 1 April and 31 August they are of compulsory school age on 31 August. If they turn 5 between 1 September and 31 December, then they are of compulsory school age on 31st December.

### School Attendance Orders

If it appears to the local authority that a child of compulsory school age is not receiving a suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise, then they must begin procedures for issuing a School Attendance Order<sup>13</sup>. The order will require the child's parents to register their child at a named school. If they fail to comply with the order the parent can be prosecuted.

Local authorities have the power to prosecute parents who fail to comply with a school attendance order or fail to ensure their child's regular attendance at a school.

### Parenting Contracts

A parenting contract is a formal written signed agreement between parents and either the local authority or the governing body of a school and should contain:

- A statement by the parents that they agree to comply for a specified period with whatever requirements are set out in the contract; and
- A statement by the local authority or governing body agreeing to provide support to the parents for the purpose of complying with the contract.

Parenting contracts can be used in cases of irregular attendance at school or alternative provision. Parenting contracts are voluntary but any non-compliance should be recorded by the school or local authority as it may be used as evidence in court where an application is made for a parenting order.

The local authority or governing body should fund any support required to implement a parenting contract (such as referral to parenting classes) and provide information to parents about other types of support available such as details of national and local agencies and helplines.

## Parenting Orders

Parenting orders are imposed by the court and the parents' agreement is not required before an order is made.

Parenting orders are available as an 'ancillary order' following a successful prosecution by the local authority for irregular attendance or breach of a school attendance order.

Parenting orders consist of 2 elements:

- A requirement for parents to attend counselling or guidance sessions (e.g. parenting education or parenting support classes) where they will receive help and support to enable them to improve their child's behaviour. This is the core of the parenting order and lasts for up to 3 months; and,
- A requirement for parents to comply with such requirements as is specified in the order. This element can last up to 12 months.

## Penalty Notices

Penalty notices are fines imposed on parents. They are an alternative to the prosecution of parents for failing to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends school. They can only be issued by the head teacher or someone authorised by them (a deputy or assistant head authorised by the head teacher), a local authority officer or the police. All schools and the police must send copies of penalties issued to the local authority. Penalty notices can be issued to each parent liable for the attendance offence or offences if:

- They fail to ensure their child attends school, or other education provision regularly.
- They allow their child to take holiday in term time without a school's agreement.
- They fail to return their child to school on an agreed date after an extended holiday.
- A child is found out of school, without permission, on two truancy sweeps, within the same school year.
- A child persistently arrives late for school after the register is closed.

## Factors that may lead to legal action:

- Unauthorised absence of more than 20%
- Where parents fail to cooperate with any interventions agreed as appropriate for their child to improve attendance.
- Where parents/carers do not respond to letters or invitations to meetings with the school and/or LA.
- A likelihood that court action will ensure that the pupils will return to school where all other strategies have failed.

Where a pupil has had an extended period of absence, the school may make a referral to the Attendance and Engagement Team.

This may be for any one or more of the following reasons:

- Irregular attendance – when recorded attendance for the proceeding 6 weeks is less than 80% and absences are either unauthorised or where a pupil has been registered for entry to the School but has not shown up (after a minimum of 2 weeks).
- Re-integration – where a pupil has had extended absence, through unauthorised absence, medical reasons or exclusions.

## MONITORING OF ATTENDANCE

Governors have designated the Headteacher to be responsible for attendance, and established a routine that ensures that regular monitoring and review take place.

- Daily** Class teachers have initial responsibility for raising concerns and should report these directly to the Headteacher or in her absence to a senior teacher.
- Weekly** The School Administrator has the responsibility to bring to the attention of the Headteacher, any pupil whose absence or punctuality is causing concern.
- Termly** The Headteacher will request a summary of attendance data and prepare a report on attendance for Governors. Progress towards meeting targets will be discussed.

### Strategies for Monitoring

#### Year Group

- Compare figures with those for other cohorts within the school.
- Compare figures for the same cohort over time i.e. as it progresses through the school.
- Compare figures with those for the same year group over time i.e. Y4 over the years
- Consider attendance pattern over the year.

#### Class Group

- Analyse long-term absentees contribution to the figure
- Consider if registration guidelines are being correctly applied
- Consider the class teacher effect
- Consider school effects e.g. over use of supply teachers etc.

#### Individuals

- Look for broken weeks – five separate one-day absences are more significant than a week's absence
- Look for same day absence each week
- Check reasons for absence
- Check absence notes
- Look for absences with friends

- Closely monitor vulnerable/'at risk' pupils
- Reward good/improved attendance
- Report to Early Intervention Hubs long-term absentees/those for whom no reason for absence has been received.
- Seek medical evidence for high illness absence

### School Monitoring of Lateness

Lateness is monitored to:

- Ensure everyone in school is recorded in case of fire and safeguarding
- Ensure pupils cannot come into school undetected
- Make it difficult for a pupil to enter a classroom late
- Ensure all teachers are consistently and correctly coding registers

## ATTENDANCE AND ENGAGEMENT SERVICE

The LA has a legal responsibility in relation to enforcing statutory regulations with regard to attendance and Child Protection through the Attendance and Engagement Team.

### Referral Process to the Attendance and Engagement Team (Attendance Issues)

A referral is made when:

- Attendance at <90%, school has contacted parents by letter and set an attendance target to be reviewed up to 20 days later
- A Parenting Contract Meeting is held if there is no improvement, attendance target set, reviewed up to 20 days later
- Interagency planning meeting has been held by school with parents, hub and AEO
- A referral to the Early Intervention Hub has been made and the pupil's attendance remains at least 20% unauthorised absence, OR non-cooperation from parents/child, OR an ESO/SAO is required OR if a decision at the interagency meeting was made to refer straight to the Attendance and Engagement Team for legal proceedings.
- The Attendance and Engagement Team referral form must be completed in full including dates of letters, parenting contracts and any referrals to the Hub and the risk assessment completed. Copies of correspondence and meeting notes with parents must be attached and an up-to-date registration certificate must also be attached or the referral will not be accepted.

## REVIEW

This policy is a working document. Therefore, it is open to change and restructure as and when appropriate by the Governing Body.

## RELEVANT POLICIES AND DOCUMENTATION

This policy should be read in conjunction with these documents:

- Admissions Policy
- Safeguarding Pupils and Child Protection Policy and associated documentation
- Behaviour Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Exclusions Policy
- OCC Guidelines on Attendance and model letters to send to parents in the case of attendance and/or punctuality concerns.

This Policy is reviewed annually by the Health & Safety Committee.

**Latest Review:**           **Spring 2017**

**Future Review:**       **Spring 2018**

## National Attendance Codes

Code	Description Physical Meaning
/	Present (AM)
\	Present (PM)
B	Educated off site (not Dual reg.)
C	Other authorised circumstances
D	Dual registration
E	Excluded
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)
G	Family holiday (not agreed)
H	family holiday (agreed)
I	Illness
J	Interview
L	Late (before registers closed)
M	Medical/Dental appointments
N	No reason yet provided for absence
O	Unauthorised Abs
P	Approved Sporting Activity
R	Religious observance
S	Study leave
T	Traveller absence
U	Late (after registers closed)
V	Educational visit or trip
W	Work experience
#	School closed to pupils & staff
Y	Enforced closure
X	Non-compulsory school age absence
Z	Pupil not on roll
-	All should attend / No mark recorded