



Oak CE Primary School Pupil Attendance Policy

Date of approval by SLT: November 2023

Date of approval by Governors: November 2023

Review date: November 2024

Introduction

Oak CE Primary School regards regular attendance at school as essential to ensure the best possible learning outcomes for all children and that regular attendance at school is necessary to promote better life chances. The school's ethos encourages children to feel that their presence in school is important and that they are missed when they are absent or late.

High attainment and progress depend on excellent attendance. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly, and every child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is a parent's legal duty to ensure their child is in school every day. There is a legal requirement for schools to set targets for improving school attendance.

This policy sets out the ways by which we seek to raise attendance, improve punctuality, to raise levels of achievement and to maximise opportunities both in school and in later life.

Why Regular Attendance Is So Important.

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring every child's regular attendance at school is the parent's/carer's responsibility and permitting absence from school without good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Roles and Responsibilities

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give parents details on attendance in our regular newsletters.
- Inform parent/carers if we are concerned about a pupil's attendance and discuss this at parents' evenings.
- Report to parent/carers yearly on their child's attendance and punctuality.
- Monitor whole school attendance continuously to analyse trends and to take supportive actions.
- Monitor and support Persistent Absentee pupils and those who are at risk of becoming a Persistent Absentee.
- Celebrate good attendance and recognise improving attendance.

Understanding Types of Absence

Every half day absence from school is classified by the school (not by the parents) as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, (please note we may require medical proof of illness) medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time (all routine medical and dental appointments should be made outside school hours) emergencies or other unavoidable cause. Absences for religious observance may also be authorised.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no “leave” has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Day trips and leave of absence in term time which have not been agreed.
- Keeping children at home due to bad weather.
- Keeping children at home with a sniffle.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a ‘persistent absentee’ when their attendance drops below 90% across the academic year **for whatever reason**. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child’s educational prospects and we need the support of parents and carers to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents/carers will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully. All our PA pupils and their parents will be subject to an Attendance Action Plan and the plan may include allocation of additional support through a Mentor, individual incentive programmes and participation in group activities around raising attendance. It may also include outside agency involvement.

School procedures

Attendance register

By law, all schools are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken 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.

Unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – before the start of the first session or as soon as practically possible. If the child’s

unplanned absence is more than one day, parents and carers must ring school every day to notify us of the absence.

Absence due to illness will be 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 parents 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 will be notified.

Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for these absences to be authorized and evidence of the appointment must be provided.

However, we encourage parents 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.

Any request for a leave of absence (including attendance at a medical or dental appointment) must be submitted in writing to the Headteacher for approval using the standard Application for Pupil Leave of absence from school form. *See appendix 2.*

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance.

Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code. A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

Following Up Absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

- Contact parents/carers by phone on each day of absence if we have not heard from them.
- If the child is subject to a Child Protection Plan; Child in Need or Looked After Child, we will also **inform their social worker.**
- A member of the safeguarding team will ring down the contact list until a reply is received.
- If there is no reply, the Headteacher will risk-assess the current level of concern and a home visit will be made by staff.
- If contact is still not made school will contact the Police either online or via 101 to initiate a "safe and well" check.
- Invite parents/carers into school to discuss the situation with our Behaviour & Attendance Manager and a member of the Senior Leadership Team if absences persist.
- Consider prosecution if attendance falls below 90% with no improvements.

Telephone Numbers

There are times when we need to contact parents/carers about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have up to always date contact numbers. There will be regular reminders on newsletters and social media about providing school with correct telephone numbers throughout the year.

At each parents' evening parents will be given a copy of their current contact details and asked to check and update the information held.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day, they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher, getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons; it can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

- Children will receive a late mark if they are not in class by the end of registration.
- Doors to the classroom open at 8.40 and close at 8.50am. Any child arriving after this point must sign in at the front office and the reason for lateness will be recorded on their record.
- If a child has a persistent late record parents/carer's will be asked to meet a member of staff to resolve the problem, but parents/carers can approach us at any time if they are having problems getting children to school on time.

Oak CE Primary School has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend regularly. All school staff are committed to working in partnership with parents, children and families to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Term Time Absence

Any absence in term time will affect a child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away on a leave of absence in term time.

Time off school is not a right and parents have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school daily.

The law states that an absence may be granted under exceptional circumstances, but this is always at the Headteacher's discretion. The DFE gave guidance for schools saying:

"Headteachers should only authorise leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. If a Headteacher grants a leave request, it will be for the Headteacher to determine the length of time that the child can be away from school. Leave is unlikely, however, to be granted for the purposes of a leave of absence."

Parents/carers wishing to take their child out of school during term time must complete the **Leave of Absence Request Form** and return to the Headteacher **before** booking. The form is available from the school office. Refusals for leave of absence will be sent to both parents for whom a penalty notice will be requested.

Where a leave of absence is taken without proper authorisation Oak CE Primary may respond as follows:

- **The absence will be recorded as unauthorised and recorded on their record.**
- **Parents will be given a Kirklees Penalty Notice for any absence of 10 school sessions (5 days), this can be split over weekends and school holidays.**
- **If a child does not attend school for a continuous period of 20 days, we will remove them from our roll, and they will no longer have a school place at Oak CE Primary.**
- **Repeated offences of leave of absence may result in the matter being directly prosecuted in Kirklees Magistrates' Court**

Parents/carers must understand that by taking children out of school they are making a choice to miss out on part of their child's education and are not fulfilling their legal duty as parents.

If parents/carers take their child out of school and the leave has not been authorised by the Headteacher they may be fined £60.00 if paid within the first 21 days, increasing to £120.00 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. This is per parent and per child.

Failure to pay the penalty notice could result in the local authority commencing legal proceedings against you for the offence of not ensuring your child's regular school attendance. If found guilty, you may be fined up to £1000, and you will receive a criminal record.

Attendance and Pupils Support Service

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problem together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Attendance and Pupil Support Officer from the Local Authority. They will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Local Authority. Alternatively, parents/carers may wish to contact Attendance and Pupil Support themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Education Authority.

Emergency Contact and First-day Calling Procedures

There have been three recent cases nationally, which highlight the need for more robust emergency contacts and first-day calling procedures. These cases emphasise that these procedures are not only important for children who the school may consider vulnerable but are important for **all children** as their absence may be indicative that they have become vulnerable. The cases are summarised below for context:

- A mum died from an epileptic fit while bathing her children aged 3 and 4. The next morning the school phoned home immediately after checking registers, no answer and so continued ringing through the contact list until they had an answer. A family member straight to the house and found mum had died, but the children were safe.
- A dad died from natural causes, Mum was working away from home, and the children were 2 and 4. In the morning Mum rang dad, no answer, but assumed he was doing the school run and continued with her working day. The school noted the absence of the 4-year-old. They started first day calling 2 hours after registration and rang dad only, leaving a message. They did not ring anyone else on the contact list. They repeated the call to Dad at 3.40. Mum rang home at the end of her working day and now worried rang another school mum. Grandmother went to the home and could not gain access because of a key in the lock inside. The police gained entry at 8pm; the children had been alone with their deceased Dad all day.
- A mum died. School made a call to her when the child was not at school; the contact list was not used. No further calls were made. A letter was sent to the parent 3 days later. Eventually the house was entered 5 days later. The child, age 6 or 7 had also died. The child was non-verbal and had SEN.

Because of these reviews, we require contact from parents and carers about each day of absence.

Oak CE Primary School First Day Calling Procedure

- 1) Class registers completed and saved.
- 2) Late children checked against registers if recorded separately.
- 3) Absence calls listened to/attendance emails checked.
- 4) First day text sent to first name on contact list within half an hour of school start time asking for response.
- 5) If no response to text call first name on contact list within 45 minutes of school start time
- 6) Ring down contact list until reply is received, ensuring where possible that someone from outside of the family home has been contacted.
- 7) If there is no reply, then send a second text and email to the first and second contacts on the list.
- 8) Alert Headteacher (Designated Safeguarding Lead) and DDSL that this child is absent if no contact has been made within an hour of school start time.
- 9) HT/DSL to risk assess the current level of concern and consider whether circumstances warrant a home visit. If the child has a social worker, they will be informed at this point.
- 10) A home visit to be made following decision at 9, where possible by school staff or any other agency involved with the child.
- 11) Contact Police to initiate a "safe and well" check if all other stages have been completed and there is still no contact regarding the absent child. This will be done using the 101 number.

Attendance Concern Procedures

First Day Unplanned Absence

First day calling procedures will be followed.

Attendance At or Below 97%

Where appropriate, a text may be sent to notify parents if their child's absence.

Attendance At or Below 95%

Where appropriate, a text will be sent to inform parents that their child's absence is being monitored.

Attendance At or Below 92%

1. Phone call from attendance lead to ask if any support can be given.
2. Headteacher may decide not to authorize absences at this point if it is felt the child could be in school.

Attendance At or Below 90%

This is now classed as Persistent Absenteeism.

The following may be actioned:

1. Parent meeting
2. Use of Action Plan/Parenting Contract
3. Involvement of Attendance and Pupils Support
4. Fixed Penalty Notice
5. Educational Supervision Order from Family Court
6. Prosecution from Kirklees Magistrates' Court.



Oak CE (VC) Primary School

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Application for Term Time Leave of Absence

Name of child:	Class:
Parents' Name:	Parents' Address:
Reason for request leave:	
First day of leave from school:	Return date to school:
Total number of days absence from school:	
Parental signature:	Date:
Office Use Only Current attendance: Number of later marks: Number of days requested: Number of previous sessions granted: Would granting this request mean that attendance falls below 95%? Yes No Entered on CPOMS SS G2 Scan	
Office use only	
Headteacher Signature	Authorised <input type="checkbox"/> Unauthorised <input type="checkbox"/>
Reasons:	

IMPORTANT NOTES:

If unauthorised leave is taken, a fixed penalty of £60 per parent, per child will be requested. Any absence will be recorded on our records as unauthorised.

If your child is absent from school for 20 continuous days, we will remove them from our roll and they will no longer have a place at Oak Primary School

If the absence results in attendance being less than 90% at time of return, an attendance meeting will be organised with the DSL and Attendance Lead.