

Attendance policy

Oakfield Lodge School



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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 student 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 students have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

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 \(Student Registration\) \(England\) 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 students
- 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 is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- 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 students and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Nick Richards and he can be contacted via n.richards@oakfieldlodge.cheshire.sch.uk

3.4 The attendance officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- 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
- Daily routine includes a whole school register being taken as the students arrive in school followed by morning calls to parents/ carers for those students not in school. The relevant marks are then recorded on the Arbor system.
- Students who are offsite, on managed moves at work placements and have tuition are managed via phone calls to the relevant agencies and conversations with tutors. These conversations are recorded on CPOMS to allow our safeguarding team to monitor students.

The attendance officer is Katie Payne and she can be contacted via kpayne@oakfieldlodge.cheshire.sch.uk

3.5 Class teachers/ form tutors

Class teachers/ form tutors are responsible for recording attendance in the schools Arbor system on a daily basis, using the correct codes.

3.6 School office staff

- School office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the schools Arbor system.
- Transfer calls from parents to the attendance officer in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance
- The Attendance officer is responsible for contacting parents that have not already made contact with school to explain absence.

3.7 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every timetabled session, each day, on time

- Call the school to report their child's absence before 8.45am 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 one emergency contact number for their child**
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

3.8 Students

Students are expected to:

- Attend every timetabled session, each day, on time

Good attendance is important in keeping students safe and healthy, they need to be seen regularly to ensure that we are able to safeguard them effectively. Good attendance is needed to ensure students are getting the most from their education and learning to their full potential

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all students 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 student 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 student is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a student 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.

Students must arrive in school by 9am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 9am and will be kept open until 9.15am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1pm and will be kept open until 1.15pm.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The student's parent/carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9.15am or as soon as practically possible (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 student'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 student's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

Parents should request a leave of absence by contacting the attendance officer. The Headteacher will then make the final decision.

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

The student'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 student who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using L code (See appendix 1)
- After the register has closed will be marked as an unauthorised absence, U code (see appendix 1)
- Where any child has patterns of lateness, the school will:
 - Follow up on their situation with their parent/carer to ascertain the reason, this will be by phone call or home visit
 - Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken
 - Ensure there is a plan to support the student in being punctual

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

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

- Attendance is tracked daily and weekly via Arbor to ensure we have seen all students in particular those who have a history of non-attendance

- Follow up on their absence with their parent/carer to ascertain the reason and if support can be implemented, by daily phone call or home visit on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence. If the school cannot reach any of the student's emergency contacts, the school may pass the information on to the Local Authority ChECS [Cheshire East Children's Service] or a key worker within social care for example.
- Those students who have not been seen by the end of each week are reported into 101 for the police to do a welfare check and reported into social care should this be appropriate.
- Attendance letters are produced in line with the local authority guidelines which enables parents / carers to monitor attendance
- Regular attendance meetings are held with families and plans are in place with the support from EWS to ensure we are giving the students the best possible support to improve their attendance
- Attendance is promoted on our TV screen which is shown in the foyer
- Form tutors monitor their forms attendance and ensure that each student is aware of their current attendance
- Effective safeguarding action is taken where necessary
- Identify whether the absence is authorised or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels via half termly report from the attendance officer.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to students during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the student is authorised to be absent for.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least four weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the attendance officer.

The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of 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 student's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller students 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 student is attending educational provision

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 student is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

The school has a rewards system in place for good attendance. Students also benefit from:

- Weekly attendance certificates which are given to students in assembly
- Fortnightly attendance is rewarded with a trip out for breakfast
- A reward trip termly for the top 8 attenders for that term
- Attendance is promoted on our TV screen which is shown in the foyer
- Form tutors monitor and encourage their forms attendance and ensure that each student is aware of their current attendance

Escalation of procedures:

- When attendance is good we encourage and congratulate the students and offer them further incentives such as reward trips to ensure they maintain a high level of attendance

- When attendance is beginning to show concern, data is further analysed to find any trends in absences such as a student being unauthorised every Monday morning. In these instances, parents / carers would be contacted and a plan for improvement established. Parents will also be advised that unless there are medical reasons, absences would be marked as unauthorised. Any medical reasons would need to be backed up by a confirmation letter
- When attendance is becoming a real concern this may be referred into EWS for support and an action plan completed with professionals and parents / carers to ensure effective support is shared and understood
- When attendance is critical, multi agency meetings are called and support is put in place with a family support worker or an ACT worker etc. If students already have professional bodies around the family, attendance would then attend any meeting for this student to discuss strategies around attendance

7. Attendance monitoring

At Oakfield lodge we consider all our students to be vulnerable due to them being excluded from their previous school and displaced from an environment and its stakeholders that are familiar and as such all attendance, as previously stated, is monitored daily for all individual students. The data is drawn down and analysed every two weeks and shared with SLT to allow those students with additional needs to be monitored both individually and within defined groups.

7.1 Monitoring attendance

The attendance officer will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual student level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Student-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 assistant head teacher will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify students or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these students 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 attendance officer and assistant head teacher will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to form tutors, classroom staff, and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with students 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

Persistent absence is where a student misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a student misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of students who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, 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

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum updated annually, or as required by the assistant head teacher. 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)	Student is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Student is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Student arrives late before register has closed

B	Off-site educational activity	Student is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Student is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Student has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Student is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Student is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Student is on a work experience placement

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

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Student 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 student is in custody
Z	Student not on admission register	Register set up but student has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/ bank holiday/INSET day