

# **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

**FOR OTLEY AND WITNESHAM PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

**December 2015**

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## Otley and Winesham Primary Schools

### ATTENDANCE POLICY

#### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Our Schools are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its pupils / students and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based on the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good attendance.
- 1.2 The whole school community – pupils, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and school governors – have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone's part in this.
- 1.3 The policy has been written based on current Government and Local Authority Guidance and Statutory Regulations. The school will ensure that all members of the community know of the policy and have access to it.
- 1.4 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 schools.

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;
- Act early to address patterns of absence.
- Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school, attend regularly.
- All pupils to be punctual to their lessons.

#### **What does the law say and what do I have to do?**

This advice summarises the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance and explains how they apply to local authorities, head teachers, school staff, governing bodies, pupils and parents.

The requirements are contained in:

- The Education Act 1996 – sections 434(1)(3)(4)&(6) and 458(4)&(5)
- The Education Act (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010, 2011 and 2013.

#### 2. School's roles and responsibilities

- 2.1 All staff (teaching and support) at both Otley and Winesham Primary Schools have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all our pupils are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day.

Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.

## 2.2 Attendance Leader

The Headteacher will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. This person, known as the Attendance Leader, will also ensure that up-to-date attendance data and issues are shared with the Senior Leadership Team, are made regularly available to all staff, pupils / students and parents (who will regularly be reminded about the importance of good school attendance) and that a report is prepared for the governing body termly. She will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

## 2.3 Registration

- i) The school is required to mark the attendance register twice each day; once at the start of the day and once during the afternoon session. Class teachers are responsible for completing the attendance registers with attendance officers in the school office using the prescribed codes where necessary.

There are national codes that schools use 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. These are the register codes;

## REGISTER CODES

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present in school
\	Present (PM)	Present in school
<b>B</b>	Off –site educational activity.	Approved Education Activity
<b>C</b>	Other Authorised Circumstances	Leave of absence authorised by the school.
<b>D</b>	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
<b>E</b>	Excluded but no alternative provision made.	Authorised absence
<b>F</b>	Extended family holiday agreed	Authorised absence
<b>G</b>	Holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of the period determined by the Headteacher.	Unauthorised absence
<b>H</b>	Holiday which has been authorised by the Headteacher	Authorised absence
<b>I</b>	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
<b>J</b>	Interview	Approved Education Activity
<b>L</b>	Late before registers close	Late arrival before the register has closed. Present.
<b>M</b>	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
<b>N</b>	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence

<b>O</b>	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Absent from school without authorisation.
<b>P</b>	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
<b>R</b>	Religious observance	Authorised absence
<b>S</b>	Study leave	Authorised absence
<b>T</b>	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
<b>U</b>	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
<b>V</b>	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
<b>W</b>	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
<b>X</b>	Non-compulsory school age absence	Not counted in possible attendances
<b>Y</b>	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
<b>Z</b>	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
<b>#</b>	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

The register will be called promptly at **9.00 am** and **1.00 pm** by each class teacher and a mark will be made during the registration period in respect of each child.

- ii) The registers will close at **9.30 am** and **1.30 pm**. Any pupil who arrives **after** the closing of the register will count as **absent**. Pupils who arrive before the register closes will be counted as **present** but will be dealt with under the school's policy on punctuality and lateness (see para 4.4 on page 7).

#### 2.4 Categorising absence

- i) A mark will be made in respect of each child during registration. Any child who is not present at this time will be marked unauthorised absence unless leave has been granted by the school in advance or the reason for absence is already known and accepted by the school as legitimate. Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the school at a later stage, the register will be amended in such a way that the original entry and the amendment / correction are distinguishable. The decision about whether the absence should be authorised or unauthorised rests with the Headteacher.
- ii) Our Schools recognise the clear links between attendance and attainment and attendance and safeguarding children. It recognises that inappropriate authorisation of absence can be as damaging to a child's education as authorised absence, will potentially send a message to parents that any reason for non-school attendance is acceptable and can render children extremely vulnerable to harm. If absence is frequent or continuous and except where a child is clearly unwell, staff at our schools will therefore challenge parents about the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence **will always rest with the Headteacher. If the Headteacher is not satisfied with the reason given for absence, then the school will record it as unauthorised.**
- iii) If no explanation about an absence is received by the school **within 2 weeks**, the absence will remain unauthorised;
- iv) Absence will be authorised in the following circumstances:
  - (a) where leave has been granted by the school in advance, for example –
    - a pupil is to participate in an approved performance for which a licence has been granted by the Local Authority,
    - a pupil is involved in an **exceptional** special occasion – in authorising such an absence the individual circumstances of the particular case and the pupil's overall pattern of attendance will be considered,
    - in **exceptional** circumstances, permission has been granted for a family holiday for which the parents have sought permission in advance (see page 8 for the school's policy on term-time holidays);
  - (b) where the school is satisfied that the child is too ill to attend;
  - (c) where the pupil has a medical appointment (although parents should be encouraged to make these out of school hours wherever possible, and to return their child to school immediately afterwards – or send him / her to school beforehand;

- (d) where there is an unavoidable cause for the absence which is beyond the family's control, eg extreme weather conditions;
  - (e) the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong;
  - (f) the pupil lives more than two miles (if he/she is under eight) or three miles (if he/she has reached eight) and no suitable transport arrangements have been made by the Local Authority;
  - (g) the pupil is of no fixed abode, his/her parent is engaged in a trade which required him/her to travel, the pupil / student has attended school as often as the nature of the trade permits **and**, have reached the age of six, he/she has attended 200 sessions in the preceding 12 months;
  - (h) in other **exceptional circumstances** (eg a family bereavement) and **for a very limited period**.
- v) Except in the circumstances described above, absences will be unauthorised. Some examples of reasons for **not** authorising absence would be:
- no explanation has been given by the parent;
  - the school is not satisfied with the explanation;
  - the pupil is staying at home to mind the house;
  - the pupil is shopping during school hours;
  - the pupil is absent for **unexceptional** reasons, eg a birthday;
  - the pupil is absent from school on a family holiday without prior permission;
  - the pupil has been stopped during a truancy sweep and is unable (or the parent is unable) to give a satisfactory reason for the absence.

### 2.5 Approved educational activity

Where a pupil is engaged in off-site approved educational activities, the school will check his/her attendance on a daily basis before entering the appropriate code in the register.

### 2.6 Staff Training

The School Attendance Leader will ensure that all staff responsible for taking registers, including any temporary or supply staff, receive sufficient training to enable them to perform the task accurately.

## 3. **Collection and analysis of data**

3.1 The Attendance Leader will ensure that attendance data is complete, accurate, analysed and reported to the senior management team; parents and the governing body (see para. above). The report should include commentary on the trajectory and the school target. The data will inform the school's future practice to improve attendance and prevent disaffection.

3.2 Attendance is monitored by year group, class group and by reasons for absence. It is also analysed by gender, ethnicity, pupils with special educational needs and those who are vulnerable to poor attendance.

3.3 Accurate attendance returns are made to the DfE within the stipulated time frame.

#### 4. Systems and strategies for managing and improving attendance

4.1 Attendance has a very high profile at Otley and Witnesham Primary Schools and is regularly discussed at assemblies. Parents are regularly reminded in newsletters and school meetings about the importance of good attendance and its links to attainment.

4.2 Our Schools have procedures for dealing with unexplained absences within a week. Contact is made by the school office directly to parents.

##### 4.3 First-day calling

Our Schools have in place a system of first-day calling. This means that parents will be telephoned on the first day a pupil is absent without explanation to establish a reason for the absence (normally before 10.00 a.m.). This helps to identify at an early stage a pupil who does not have a good reason for absence or who may be absent without their parents' knowledge. Where it is not possible to make contact with parents on the first day of absence, the school will send a letter to them by first class post.

##### 4.4 Meetings with parents

Where there is an emerging pattern to a pupil absence over a 3 to 4 week period (or sooner if staff are particularly concerned), with or without explanation, the school will invite parents to a meeting to discuss the reasons for the absences. Plans should be put in place with the parents and pupil to resolve any difficulties and improve the attendance within a specified time limit – usually no more than 6 weeks. It will be explained to parents that any future absences will be unauthorised unless there is clear evidence of a good reason for them.

##### 4.5 Referral to the Education Welfare Service

If there continue to be unauthorised absences by the end of the specific time (or sooner if the pupil is failing to attend school at all), the matter will be referred to the Education Welfare Service.

##### 4.6 Lateness and punctuality

Pupils are expected to arrive at school, on time every day. It is very disruptive to their own education and that of others in their class, if they are late. Pupils who arrive after the register closes (see para. 2.3 (iii) on page 5) will be marked absent for the whole session (a session being a morning or an afternoon). This absence will be unauthorised unless the school is satisfied that there is a legitimate reason for the pupil to be late. A pupil who is persistently absent by reason of lateness will be dealt with in the same way as other students with an emerging pattern of absence (see para. 4.3). If the matter is not resolved quickly, it will be referred to the Education Welfare Service.

4.7 Pupils who arrive late for school but before the register closes must report to the School Office.

4.8 For health and safety reasons it is important that the school knows who is in the building. Pupils arriving late should therefore report to the office where their name will be recorded in the correct register. **It is important that all pupils arriving late follow this procedure.**

4.9 For the same reason it is important that pupils leaving the premises legitimately (eg for a medical appointment), or returning to school later in the day must inform the school office.

#### 4.10 Post-registration truancy

Post-registration truancy occurs when a pupil goes missing from school having previously registered for the session. This behaviour not only means the pupil will not be receiving a full-time education, it also potentially renders him/her vulnerable to harm. Otley and Witnesham Primary Schools takes this very seriously and will endeavour to ensure it does not happen. If, however, a pupil appears to have left the premises without authorisation, the school will try to make contact with his/her parents immediately.

### 5. **Term-time Holidays**

5.1 Term-time holidays are intended for children whose parents are unable to take holiday at any other time.

5.2 Otley and Witnesham Primary Schools will consider every application individually; its policy is NOT to grant leave of absence for a holiday other than in the most exceptional circumstances. Time off school for family holidays **is not a right**. An application must be made in writing, with appropriate evidence, **in advance (at least 3 weeks)** of the intended holiday.

5.3 The Headteacher will consider authorising holidays for:

- service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays during term-time;
- when a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis;
- parents who are subject to a strict and un-negotiable holiday rota and evidence is provided to this effect.

5.4 Requests for holidays for the following reason will **not** be authorised:

- cheaper cost of holiday;
- availability of the desired accommodation;
- poor weather experienced in school holiday periods;
- overlap with beginning or end of term.

5.5 The Headteacher will respond to all requests for a leave of absence in writing.

5.6 The Headteacher will NOT authorise a holiday during periods of national tests, ie SATS (end of key stage testing).

**From 1<sup>st</sup> December 2014 the Governing Body of Our Schools decided to support the local authority issuing penalty notices.**

For our schools this means that a Penalty Notice can be issued where a child has been identified as having an unauthorised absence. In Our Schools, recent examples of unauthorised absence have included holidays during term time which do not fall under the exceptional circumstances category; days for travelling to visit family, particularly either side

of a weekend; where children are tired after a late night; prolonged periods of illness where no doctors certification has been provided and children who arrive at school late, after the registers have closed. **The Governing Body has adopted a policy of referral when an accumulated total of 5 days (10 sessions) unauthorised absence has occurred within an academic year (Sept-July).**

The local authority (LA) issues Penalty Notices following a referral from the school. Guidelines are adhered to which the Headteacher will follow, often with the support of the Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

The amount of penalty for each child is £60.00 if paid within 21 days and £120.00 after 21 days, but within 28 days of receipt. Non-payment will result in prosecution. Each parent of a child receives a penalty notice.

The LA retains the money collected to cover their costs.

## **6. Extended leave of absence**

6.1 In considering absence for extended trips overseas the Headteacher will take account of the following:

- a visit to family overseas has a very different significance from a normal 'holiday';
- such visits may be important in terms of children's identity and self-esteem as they grow up;
- parents may feel that the reasons for their visit outweigh the importance of their child's uninterrupted attendance at school (although parents could be encouraged to use the school holiday periods for at least part of their trip);
- the reasons for wishing to make a visit is more difficult, particularly for ethnic minority families, where huge distances and high costs are involved;
- where extended leave of absence is granted there will be an expectation that the pupil undertakes some school-set work during this period.

## **7. Parents' / carers' responsibilities**

7.1 The prime responsibility for ensuring children receive an appropriate and full-time education rests with parents / carers (defined by the Education Act 1996 as those with parental responsibility and those who have the care of a child), who will be supported and encouraged by our Schools.

7.2 Our Schools expect parents / carers will:

- ensure their children attend the school regularly;
- support their children's attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum;
- not expect the school to automatically agree any requests for absence, and not condone unjustified absence from school.

7.3 Parents will also be expected to:

- notify the school on the first day of absence by telephoning or reporting in person to the School Office and to keep the school informed on a daily basis during the period of absence.

- ensure their children arrive at school on time, properly dressed and with the right equipment for the day;
- work in partnership with the school, for example by attending parents' meetings and consultations, signing homework diaries when asked to do so, taking an interest in their children's work and activities;
- contact the school without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their children's school lives. Otley and Witnesham Primary Schools will endeavour to support parents to address their concerns.
- When returning to school, parents should write a letter explaining the reason for their child's absence.

## **8. Pupils' responsibilities**

- 8.1 All pupils should be aware of the importance of regular school attendance. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school regularly, they should speak to their class teacher.
- 8.2 Pupils should attend each morning / afternoon session, ready to learn. If they have been absent from school they should give their class teacher a note from their parents to explain the absence. Pupils also have a responsibility for following school procedures if they arrive late.

## **9. Governors' responsibilities**

- 9.1 The governing body of a Maintained School shall make arrangements for ensuring that their functions relating to the conduct of the school are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are pupils at the school.

## **10. Conclusion**

- 10.1 It is recognised that there is a clear link between school attendance and how well pupils achieve in school. Regular school attendance is vital in ensuring that children maximise the educational opportunities available to them and it is also an important element in safeguarding them from harm. It also contributes to:

### **Be healthy –**

- attendance at school supports children's emotional and social health and development
- the school curriculum teaches children to be healthy

### **Stay safe –**

- schools and the LA have a statutory duty to promote the safety and welfare of children
- the best way to safeguard children is to ensure they attend school regularly

### **Enjoy and achieve –**

- good school attendance supports children in reaching their maximum potential and enjoying the fulfilment this brings

**Make a positive contribution –**

- membership of a school community builds confidence, gives children a sense of belonging and teaches them to contribute to and be responsible for the well-being of others

**Achieve economic well-being –**

- good school attendance supports engagement in further education, employment or training in the future, which in turn helps to support a prosperous and fulfilling life-style

**Reviewing the policy**

The Headteacher and Governors will review this policy regularly in line with Government and Local Authority regulations.

## **A GUIDE FOR PARENTS**

### **1. When does my child need to be in School?**

Your child should be at school in good time for registration. The morning bell rings at 8.55 although children are expected to be in the playground by 8.50. The register will be called promptly at 9.00 **am** and the afternoon register at 1.00 **pm**.

### **2. What happens if my child is late?**

Registration finishes at 9.30 **am** in the morning and 1.30 **pm** in the afternoon.

Pupils who arrive after registration should report to the school office and give a reason why they are late. If a pupil is late on a regular basis a meeting will be arranged with a member of staff to discuss reasons / difficulties for lateness.

### **3. Does the School need letters explaining my child's absence or will a phone call do?**

We would expect a parent to telephone the school on the first day of absence. If you do not phone us, we will phone you. Keeping us informed on a daily basis during an absence is something that we also require. However, we need a written explanation on your child's return to school. If we do not receive an explanation, or if the explanation is unsatisfactory, we will not authorise the absence, and this will be shown on your child's end of year report.

### **4. What reasons will the school accept for absences?**

- Illness
- Emergency dental / medical appointment (please make routine appointments after school or during the holidays)
- Day of religious observance
- Family bereavement

Except in the case of illness, you should ask for permission for your child to miss school well in advance, giving full details. In cases of recurring absences through illness you may be asked to produce a medical certificate.

### **5. What is unacceptable?**

The school will not authorise absence for day trips, term time holiday (unless previously discussed with the Headteacher), visiting relatives, shopping, birthdays or looking after brothers or sisters, etc.

**6. Will the School contact me if my child is absent?**

The school operates a first day response to absences: we will phone you if we have not heard from you. This is because we believe it is our responsibility to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance.

If we are concerned about aspects of your child's attendance or punctuality we will contact you to discuss the best way forward.

**7. I am thinking about sending my child on an extended absence for an overseas trip to visit relatives. What should I do?**

The school recognises that such absence can be important for children to keep in touch with their extended family. Contact your child's class teacher as soon as possible to discuss the best time for such a visit.

The school would strongly recommend that such absences do not take place during your child's SATs examinations. You need to complete an application form for extended leave of absence and if the Headteacher then approves the visit, the school will set work for your child to complete while away.

As far as possible we will ensure the work set reinforces the educational value of such a visit.

**8. What can I do to encourage my child to attend School?**

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he / she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his / her education.

**9. My child is trying to avoid coming to School. What should I do?**

Contact your child's class teacher immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem.

In some cases you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with an Education Welfare Officer. The school may also refer you to an Education Welfare Officer who works with staff and families if difficulties with attendance arise. The Education Attendance Service is based at:

Suffolk County Council – Education Welfare Officers  
Landmark House  
4 Egerton Road  
Ipswich IP1 5PF

Tel. No. 01473 263112

