



St Oswald's CE Primary School, York



Learning for all, caring for each other, preparing for the future

Let us encourage one another – Hebrews 10.25

Attendance policy

Date published	June 2019
Last Reviewed	December 2023
Next Review date	December 2025

Contents

1. Aims	2
2. Legislation and guidance	2
3. Roles and responsibilities	2
4. Recording attendance.....	3
5. Authorised and unauthorised absence	4
6. Strategies for promoting attendance	6
7. Attendance monitoring.....	7
8. Monitoring arrangements.....	7
9. Links with other policies.....	7
Appendix 1: attendance codes	8

1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

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

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#) (and [2010](#), [2011](#), [2013](#), [2016](#) amendments)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

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

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

Attendance is regularly discussed at governing body meetings. Termly updates are provided in the Headteacher's Report to Governors. The FGB committee also discuss rates of attendance and any particularly cases requiring support or intervention.

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary
- Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence

3.3 The attendance officer (office manager)

The school attendance officer:

- Monitors attendance data across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the headteacher
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

3.4 Class Teachers

Class Teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

3.5 School office staff

School office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system.

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

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

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

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

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

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

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.45am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.45am and will be kept open until 9.00am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1.00pm in EYFS and KS1, and 1.15pm in KS2 and will be kept open until 1.30pm.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9am 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 pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance. Ongoing absences due to medical conditions will require medical evidence to ascertain if the levels of absence from school are proportionate.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

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

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

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

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

Some children with an EHCP or SEND may have flexible arrival and departure times. These situations will be dealt with on an individual basis. Typically, any arrival after 9.20am will be marked as absent after registers are closed. Detailed notes of EHCP/SEND attendance patterns should be recorded on Intergris and/or CPOMS.

4.5 Following up absence

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the school will:

- Follow up on their absence with their parent/carer to ascertain the reason
- Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use

4.6 Reporting to parents

A copy of each child's attendance record is provided as part of their end-of-year report to parents/carers.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to pupils during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion.

We define '**exceptional circumstances**' as

- Attendance at family funerals and ceremonies (generally 1 day)
- Medical reasons and appointments (with evidence if appropriate)
- Attendance at extra-curricular events (e.g. sporting competition or tournament) (generally 1 day)
- Religious worship or commitments (generally 1 day in line with published religious calendars)
- Visiting prospective future schools or educational establishments (including for examinations) (generally 1 day)
- Visiting relatives, family or friends who may be gravely ill (for a short period of up to 1 week)

The following examples are not classed as 'exceptional circumstances' and will usually be marked as **unauthorised**:

- Family holidays at any time during the school term (this includes holidays rearranged due to availability and/or cost pressures)

- Visiting relatives, family or friends – including abroad – for no exceptional reason
- Parental work or study commitments

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

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (sometimes with medical evidence - see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
- Flexi-schooling requests: For some children with SEND and/or an EHCP, we may authorise some absence as part of a flexi-schooling plan

5.2 Reducing persistent absence

We work very closely with families to reduce persistent absenteeism. All families with children with attendance under 90% receive a termly reminder, in person at parents' evenings, and by letter if the concern is significant. If children's attendance continues to be of concern, the school will arrange regular meetings with parents/carers and will explore possible legal sanctions if appropriate.

5.3 Legal sanctions

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

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

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

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

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

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

Parents can be issued a **Fixed Penalty Notice** by the Local Authority for their child's non-attendance. The penalty is £60 and this rises to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. Each Local Authority should publish a 'Code of Conduct' for Fixed Penalty Notices. The School's headteacher decides if they wish to fine

unauthorised absences from school by issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice. The headteacher then requests by a referral to the Local Authority to issue a fixed Penalty Notice on his or her behalf.

There is no right of appeal against a Fixed Penalty Notice. If this is not paid, the Local Authority can proceed to prosecution or withdraw the notice. The Local Authority can also prosecute parents for non-attendance without issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice. Only the Local Authority can prosecute parents and they must fund all associated costs. Local authorities must conduct its investigations in line with the [Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 \(PACE\)](#).

If a registered pupil of compulsory school age fails to attend school regularly, the parent could be guilty of an offence under [section 444 Education Act 1996](#). In April 2017, the Supreme Court held that attending school “regularly” means attendance in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school and not “sufficiently frequent attendance”. This means that a child must attend school on every day that the school requires him or her to do so and failure to do this may lead to the commission of an offence.

There are 2 offences:

1. [Section 444\(1\) Education Act 1996](#) – If the child is absent without authorisation then the parent is guilty of an offence. This is a strict liability offence i.e. all that needs to be shown is a lack of regular attendance. Sanctions can include a fine of up to £1,000.

2. [Section 444\(1A\) Education Act 1996](#) – an aggravated offence. If the child is absent without authorisation and the parent knew about the child’s absence and failed to act then the parent is guilty of an offence. Sanctions can include a fine of up to £2,500 and a prison sentence of up to 3 months.

There are some limited defences to these offences:

- The head teacher authorised the absence.
- The child could not attend because of sickness or ‘unavoidable cause’ in an emergency. Case law has held that stress arising from bullying, behavioural or mental health difficulties or a ‘chaotic lifestyle’ should not be considered an ‘unavoidable cause’.
- The child was absent on a day exclusively set apart for religious observance.
- The school is outside of the statutory walking distance of the child’s home and the Local Authority has a duty to make travel arrangements in relation to the child under and has failed to discharge that duty
- The child is not registered at the school and the parents are providing a suitable alternative education.
- The parents’ trade or business requires them to travel from place to place.

Parents can also be prosecuted by Local Authorities under [section 103 Education and Inspections Act 2006](#), where a pupil of compulsory school age who remains on the Admissions Register is found in a public place during school hours, after being excluded from school. Sanctions can include a fine of up to £1,000.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

We regularly promote the importance of school attendance with families and children and mention attendance information in our fortnightly newsletters and whole school newsletters.

7. Attendance monitoring

The Headteacher and Senior Leaders at our school monitor pupil absence on a monthly basis.

A pupil’s parent/carer is expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 4.2).

If we have not received a message by 9.30am, the school will contact parents by telephone to ascertain the reason for absence.

Where the reason for absence is not clear, and a pupil's absence continues to rise after contacting their parent/carer, we will consider involving an education welfare officer.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

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

Our school collects and stores attendance data which is used for the following reasons:

- Track the attendance of individual pupils
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern
- Monitor and evaluate those children identified as being in need of intervention and support

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every 3 years. The policy will be approved by the full governing board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

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

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

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness

M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

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