



# **Oaklands School**

**“The best for all, the best from all”**

## **Attendance policy**

| Date reviewed:                | Review Cycle | Policy Review Date: |
|-------------------------------|--------------|---------------------|
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## **1. Aims**

Oaklands School recognises the importance of good attendance and the impact it has on children's progress, attainment, enjoyment of learning and relationships within school. Good attendance helps a child to realise their potential and ensure they are motivated, confident and enjoy a diverse range of curricular opportunities and experiences. Our school policy promotes good attendance, which is recognised and rewarded as an achievement. The school monitors attendance and ensures quick and early intervention if a problem is identified. We recognise that whole school preventative and proactive approaches are key to promoting children wellbeing and attendance. A child must attend school every day that they are required to do so unless an exceptional circumstance applies.

Our policy is accessible to leaders, staff, pupils, and parents, and is published on our school website. It will be sent to Parents with any initial information when pupils join the school and reminded of it at the beginning of each school year and when it is updated. In doing so, we will seek the views of pupils and parents. The Attendance & Punctuality Policy is based on the premise of equal opportunities for all.

Our school aims to meet its 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. We emphasize to pupils and parents that:

- Good attendance at school is essential.
- If your attendance is above 96% you have the opportunity to achieve and succeed. The school target for whole school attendance is 96%.
- 90% attendance means three weeks and four days of learning missed per school year. This level of attendance is not good. 90% means that children will struggle with their school work because that is the equivalent of one day off every fortnight.

We aim to boost attendance to support the students to achieve to the best of their ability.

## **2. Legislation**

Regular and punctual attendance at school is a legal requirement. Regular attendance is essential to enable children to maximise their educational attainment, opportunities and further development.

- Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that “The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise”.
- Section 444 (1) of the Education Act 1996 states that “if a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school his parent is guilty of an offence”.
- Section 576 Education Act 1996 - Meaning of “parent”

For the purposes of Education Law, the definition of a ‘parent’ and who is responsible for ensuring regular attendance to school is:

- all biological parents, whether they are married or not
- any person who, although not a biological parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person - this could be an adoptive parent, a step-parent, guardian or other relative
- any person who, although not a biological parent and does not have parental responsibility, has care of a child or young person. This could be one parent, both parents and/or carer/s.

### **3. Attendance register**

Registers provide the daily record of attendance of all pupils. They are legal documents and the register may be required in a court of law, for example as evidence in prosecutions for non-attendance in school.

‘Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006’ (section 6)

Schools must take the attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day, morning (a.m.) and once during the second session, afternoon (p.m.).

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session.

On each occasion they must record whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved educational activity
- Absent
- 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 as a priority and returned to the school office in a timely manner. This is used to download data to the School Census.

- Consider early identification, assessment, intervention and support processes that may need to be implemented.

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment

The register should be marked using the codes as advised by the Department for Education (DfE) 'Working together to improve School Attendance Guidance' (for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities) [Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance) (See appendix 1.)

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.50am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.55am and will be kept open until 9.25am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1.30pm and will be kept open until 1.40pm. Any pupil arriving after 8.55am will be marked as late ( L ) on the register. If a pupil arrives after 9.25am without prior warning they will be marked as a U, meaning that the morning session is unauthorised.

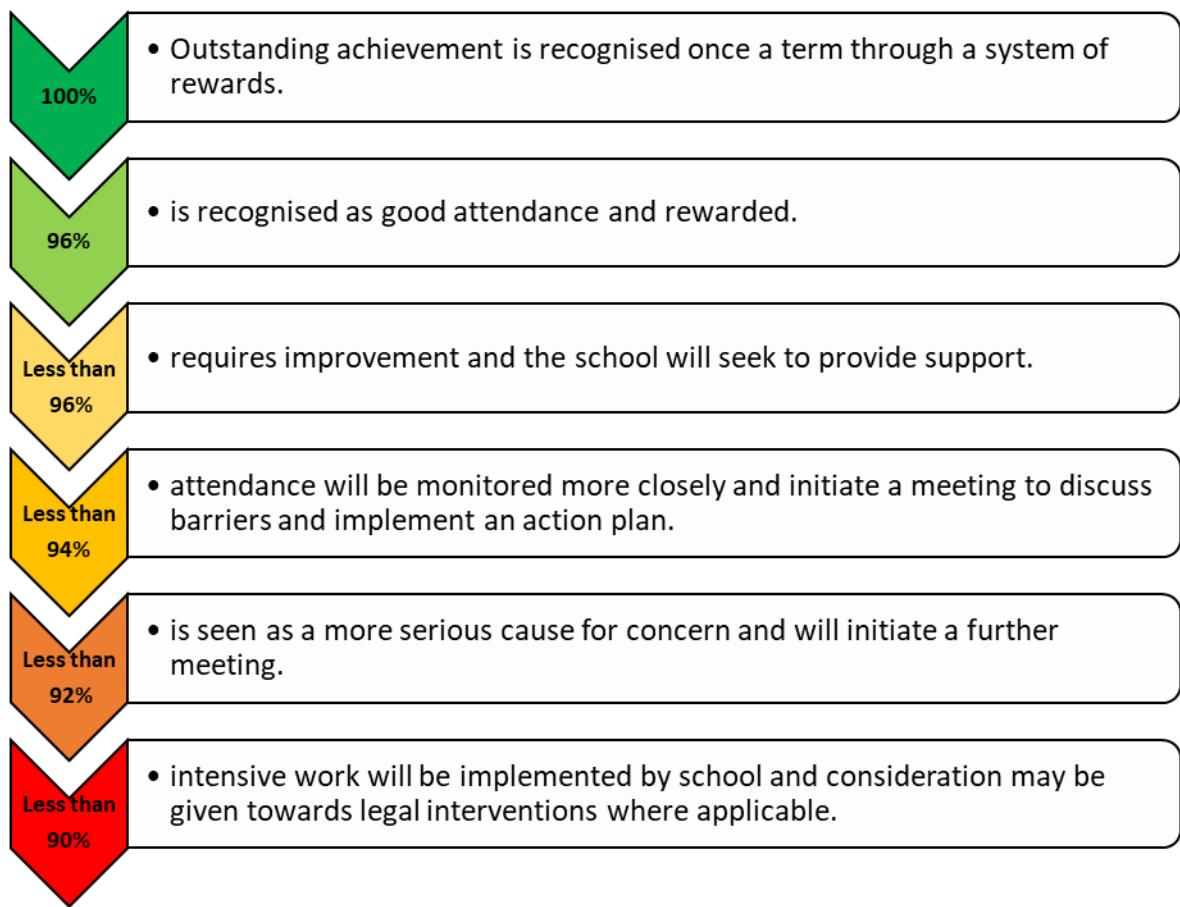
#### **4. What can parents/carers do to help and working in partnership with Parents/ Carers**

Let the school know straight away why your child is absent. Home/school communication is extremely important in supporting your child to achieve and feel settled in school. Try to make any dental and medical appointments outside of school time

It is pertinent that school and parents / carers work together with a shared plan and outcomes when supporting a child / young person's attendance and wellbeing. If despite persistent attempts to work with parents, there continues to be a lack of engagement, then legal procedures may be followed to secure engagement and school attendance

As a school we recognise that building respectful relationships with families and working in collaboration is essential to ensuring the best outcomes for children / young people. We require all parents to actively support the work of the school, including promoting attendance and engagement. We are committed to ensuring that systems and processes are in place with regards to promoting attendance and would encourage parents to make contact if they have concerns about their child.

The table below sets out the attendance targets and at what stage parents/carers will be contacted about their child's attendance.



## 5. Unplanned absence – the procedure

Children are expected to attend school regularly, unless there is good reason for absence.

There are two types of absence:

- Authorised (where the school approves a pupil absence) (Marked as a C Code)
- Unauthorised (where school will not approve the absence) (Marked as an O Code)

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 – by 9.25am or as soon as practically possible (see also section 6).

All parents are asked to contact school if their child is absent. This can be done by telephoning and leaving a message, for the attendance welfare officer, on the school answer phone (option 2) or alternatively you can speak to a member of the office team. All telephone messages are recorded on SIMS. Parents can also email the absence details to [office@oaklandsschool.org](mailto:office@oaklandsschool.org)

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 of this in advance.

#### **First Day Contact:**

##### **Day 1**

If a student is absent from school and we have not had contact from the parent/carers, the Attendance Officer will contact home to establish the reason for the absence. If there is no answer we will leave a message and we will also send an attendance text message asking parents to contact school.

##### **Day 2**

Repeat the above. If contact still cannot be established, then the next process is:

If a student is a CIC or has an allocated social worker or family support worker, the DSL may refer the student to them and advise that we cannot contact parents or carers regarding a student absence.

We may contact other members of the family and also check with sibling schools if they are known to us.

##### **Day 3**

##### **Repeat Day 1**

Home visit may take place by an appropriate member of staff, depending on family circumstances

Once established why a student has been absent then a discussion would take place either face to face or by telephone with the parent or carer to discuss why it is essential that parents keep school informed of a student's absence from school.

These are the guidelines we use, but every case would be discussed and if necessary we would escalate procedures depending on what is known about the student's background and needs.

#### **6. Medical absence**

Absence due to sickness should be reported to the school on the first day of absence. The school should be kept informed during longer periods of absence. School will contact parents during the first day if no satisfactory reason for absence has been received. The school will ask about the child's symptoms in order to record their absence accurately.

Any medical absences will need to be supported by medical evidence. If verbal advice is given a note will be made on the students records with a request to provide evidence and if no medical evidence is received, then the absence may be recorded as unauthorised. The school will work with all families on an individual basis if medical absences exceed 5 days ( 10 sessions ) per academic year.

For children who have a medical condition and cannot attend school, the school will refer to the Cheshire West and Chester Council's Medical Needs Team.

<https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/documents/education-and-learning/medical-needs-service/medical-needs-policy-latest.pdf>

Their policy states that referrals must come directly from the child's school and must be supported by medical evidence from one of the following health professionals:

- consultant paediatrician or adolescent psychiatrist
- consultant child psychiatrist
- hospital consultant

Supporting evidence from a General Practitioner alone cannot be accepted.

As from 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024 schools must make a sickness return to the Local Authority and provide the full name and address of all pupils who have been recorded with the code I (Illness) and who the school has reasonable grounds to believe they will miss 15 days consecutively or cumulatively because of sickness. This is to help the school and Local Authority to agree any provisions needed to ensure continuity of education of pupils who cannot attend because of health needs, in line with the statutory guidance on Education for Children with health needs:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-for-children-with-health-needs-who-cannot-attend-school>

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences with a letter or appointment card.

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.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

## **7. Lateness and punctuality**

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed (0855-0925) will be marked as late, using the code L.

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed ( 0925 onwards ) will be marked as absent, using the U code, meaning that the morning session will be unauthorised.

If a student is persistently late with no reasonable explanation then a school behaviour consequence maybe applied.

In accordance with the 'Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006', if your child arrives after the registers close, they will receive a mark, code U, that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Fixed Penalty Notice or other legal action if the problem persists.

Children who are consistently late for school are disrupting not only their own education, but also that of other children. Where persistent lateness gives cause for concern, you will be invited to a meeting to resolve the issues. If there is no improvement following this meeting, further action will be taken which may include referral to external agencies.

You may approach the school at any time for support and advice if you are having difficulty getting your child to school on time or maintaining regular attendance.

## **8. 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.

Any unauthorised absences will be followed up with parents within a two week period and if there is no acceptable explanation why their child is **absent** from school then the absence will be unauthorised.

## **9. Reporting to parents**

Parents receive attendance information via:

- Pastoral processes
- Parents' evening
- Interim reports
- End of year reports

Students who attendance falls below 96% receive a letter explaining that their child's attendance has fallen into the 'Persistence Absence' category and they are advised that Local Authority intervention could be implemented if their child's attendance does not improve.

## **10. Authorised and unauthorised absence**

### **Granting approval for term-time absence**

- Unauthorised Absence and Fixed Penalty Notice**

An absence may be coded as 'unauthorised' if:

- i. no reason for absence has been given (Code O)
- ii. medical evidence is not received when requested (Code O)
- iii. a request for a leave of absence has been unauthorised (Code O or G)
- iv. a pupil arrives at school after registration has closed at 9.25am (Code U)

Parents/carers should be aware that Oaklands School may contact the Local Authority if a pupil has 10 or more unauthorised absences in a 10 week rolling period with a view to issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice or other legal action.

The first penalty notice issued to the parent for that pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days reducing to £80 if paid within 21 days. Where it is deemed appropriate to issue a second penalty notice to the same parent for the same pupil within 3 years of the first notice, the second notice is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.

A third penalty notice must not be issued within a 3 year period. Therefore, in cases where the threshold is met for a third (or subsequent) times within those 3 years, a penalty notice cannot be issued and alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution, but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

Any warning letters or letters concerning Fixed Penalty Notices that are sent by school will be sent to parent/carers by post or sent via school email. It is the responsibility of the parent/carers to ensure that school have up to date contact details including email addresses.

- Application for Exceptional Circumstances**

As of 19th August 2024, the law ceases to include a leave of absence for a family holiday. A leave of absence should not be granted unless there are exceptional circumstances. Generally, a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation would not constitute an exceptional circumstance. Head Teachers are only empowered to approve a leave of absence when it is requested in advance by the parent or carer with whom the child resides and when circumstances of the requested leave are 'exceptional'.

The Head Teacher and the Governing Body will determine what constitutes an exceptional circumstance on an individual basis. If parents/carers need to request Exceptional Leave of Absence, they must complete an 'Exceptional Leave of Absence' form available from the school office. It should be noted that if any application is declined and absence occurs of a consecutive 5 or more unauthorised days, then school may apply to the Local Authority for a Fixed Penalty Notice to be issued to each parent/carer.

The following will not be deemed to be exceptional circumstances:

- Family holiday
- Availability of less expensive holiday

- Availability of holiday accommodation
- Parent/carer's working commitments
- Holiday pre-booked by another family member

A child's absence during term time seriously disrupts their continuity of learning. Not only do they miss the teaching on the days they are away but are less prepared for the lessons building on that teaching when they return to school. There is a consequent risk of under achievement, which we must seek to avoid.

The Governing Body is responsible for ensuring any attendance issues are dealt with in line with school policy.

Every week the attendance officer will run the attendance figures and all the students whose attendance is below 96% will have their attendance recorded on the tracking spreadsheet and monitored weekly until their attendance rises above 96%. If their attendance does not improve on a weekly basis, further action may be taken to help achieve good attendance.

## **11. Religious Observance**

We recognise that some pupils may need to participate in days of religious observance.

Where a day of religious observance.

- falls during school time and
- has been exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil belongs

We ask that parents/carers notify the school in writing in advance where absence is required due to a religious observance.

## **12. Strategies for promoting attendance**

As a school we promote good attendance and punctuality, and offer support to those families who may need help with these issues.

Schools may use a variety of different strategies to promote attendance and punctuality.

At Oaklands we promote attendance by using the following strategies:

- All 100% students each week will be entered into a KS3 and KS4/5 draw and the winner for each KS will receive £5.00 voucher.
- All 96% students within a term are entered into their form group raffle for a £10.00 voucher.

- All 96% students within a year are entered into a raffle and the winner receive a £20.00 voucher.
- We follow the Local Authorities 'School attendance guidance and pathway to statutory legal interventions document' This document provides a consistent approach to managing attendance.
- First Monday of every month SLT discuss attendance especially below PA students (below 96%).
- When a child's attendance falls below 96%, appropriate action will be taken.
- Form tutors receive weekly attendance figures for all students and weekly PA spreadsheet.
- Form Groups will have an Attendance Folder online to keep and monitor student's attendance.
- As a school we have employed a part-time Family Support Worker to help engage and support parents.
- Regularly discuss the importance of regular attendance at school assemblies.

### **13. Attendance monitoring**

The attendance officer monitors pupil absence on a daily basis.

Parents are expected to call or email the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2).

Parents are expected to call or email the school each day a child is ill, with an up-to-date explanation of how the child is.

If a pupil's absence goes above five days we will contact the parents to discuss the reasons for this.

If after contacting parents a pupil's absence continues to rise, we will consider further action.

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 is 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. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with governors.

## **14. Roles and responsibilities**

### **14.1 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.

### **14.2 The headteacher**

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.

The headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

### **14.3 The attendance officer**

The attendance officer:

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Designated Safe Guarding Lead.
- Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

### **14.4 Form Tutors**

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

### **14.5 Office staff**

Office staff are expected to:

- Take calls from parents about absences and record it on the school system.
- Make calls to parents about absences and record it on the school system.
- Monitor the school mail-box for absences and record it on the school system.
- Follow-up absences via messages/email/ text as required and record it on the school system.

## Appendix 1: Attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance as of September 2024

### Attending a place other than the school.

These codes are classified for statistical purposes as attending an approved educational activity.

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| Code K | Attending education provision arranged by the local authority |
| Code V | Attending an educational visit or trip                        |
| Code P | Participating in a sporting activity                          |
| Code W | Attending work experience                                     |
| Code B | Attending any other approved educational activity             |
| Code D | Dual registered at another school                             |

### Absent leave of absence

These codes are classified for statistical purposes as authorised absence.

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| Code C1 | Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.      |
| Code M  | Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment   |
| Code J1 | Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution |
| Code S  | Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination   |
| Code X  | Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school   |
| Code C2 | Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable   |
| Code C  | Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance   |

### Absent - other authorised reasons

These codes are classified for statistical purposes as authorised absence.

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| Code T | Parent travelling for occupational purposes                         |
| Code R | Religious observance  |
| Code I | Illness (not medical or dental appointment)                         |
| Code E | Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made |

**Absent - unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause.**

These codes are classified for statistical purposes as not a possible attendance

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| Code Q  | Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements    |
| Code Y1 | Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available |
| Code Y2 | Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel                 |
| Code Y3 | Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed        |
| Code Y4 | Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed |
| Code Y5 | Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention              |
| Code Y6 | Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law       |
| Code Y7 | Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause                 |

**Absent - unauthorised absence**

These codes are classified for statistical purposes as unauthorised absence.

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| Code G | Holiday not granted by the school           |
| Code N | Reason for absence not yet established      |
| Code O | Absent in other or unknown circumstances    |
| Code U | Arrived in school after registration closed |